THE PATRIARCHS, KINGS AND PROPHETS OF ISRAEL



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Historical and Expository Notes

ON

THE PATRIARCHS, KINGS AND PROPHETS OF ISRAEL

BY

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PREFACE

These notes were written to accompany the Bible Study Union Biographical lessons on the PATRIARCHS, KINGS AND PROPHETS of the Old Testament. They were originally published in various weekly papers, and were found so valuable as to warrant their issue in book form for permanent use.

Dean Sanders aims in his part of the work to give the historical setting of each lesson. In doing this he has brought together in popular form a wide range of archæological, literary and historical data which throw light upon the actual personalities of the Old Testament record. This enables the teacher and student to win a true historical perspective and thus to understand each lesson in the light of its contribution to the progress of events and its original meaning. While ignoring the crude and unproved theories of recent investigations, these notes embody the best of the well-established results of modern scholarship, so far as they are of value in giving vividness and accuracy to interpretation.

Dr. Morgan's aim, on the contrary, is to bring out the principal homiletic and practical teachings of the lessons. His work assumes that the student has become acquainted with the Scripture facts through the study of the lesson itself, and proceeds to set forth the great spiritual and moral truths naturally derived from them. His acknowledged skill in this kind of exposition makes his notes especially helpful.

Teachers and pupils alike will find these notes a great aid toward the correct understanding and best use of the Scripture material.

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HISTORICAL AND EXPOSITORY NOTES

Lesson 1. ABRAHAM'S MIGRATION TO CANAAN. The Beginning of the Hebrew People. Scripture Section, Gen. 11: 27—12: 20; 15: 1—17: 27

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

The Biographical Method the Bible Method.

The biographical method of relating history is the method which was adopted by the prophetic historians of the Bible. These men took little or no pains to indicate the time relations of an age; they described only in an incidental way its social and political changes; but they rejoiced to portray its great leaders, the men through whose sensitiveness to the Divine presence and useful personalities God could re-introduce Himself to mankind and promote a new departure in religious history.

This emphasis on personalities rather than events explains the never-ending charm of these historical writings; but it is also the great working method for the Biblical historian. It passes over trivial data and centers attention upon the important factors of every historical movement. It converts historical narrative from that which merely stores the mind into that which stimulates the life. It enables the memory to retain with ease the achievements of centuries.

Archaeological Data a Valuable Supplement.

In the book of Genesis, beginning with the story of Abraham, this Scriptural method is effectively used. Three great personalities dominate its pages and furnish the clue to the Biblical interpretation of the history of the centuries which preceded the exodus and settlement of the Hebrew people in Canaan. So far removed from

us, however, both in time and in surroundings, are these personalities that in order to comprehend their Biblical portraitures it is desirable that we use the supplementary data afforded by archæological research. Realizing in this way the working environment of a great leader, we can make a truer and more valuable estimate of his place in the history of religion.

Abraham, the Religious Pioneer.

Archæology cannot establish beyond dispute the historical reality of Abraham, but does prove the general reasonableness of the Scriptural narratives regarding him. It throws a valuable light upon three questions, which are raised by Genesis 11 and 12: the stock from which he sprung, the social and religious conditions of his age, and the probable motive for his migration.

The Hebrews belonged to the Semitic family of nations, a group of peoples characterized historically by initiative zeal and religious susceptibility, but lacking the Aryan genius for unification and administration. Originating probably in Arabia, the Semites imposed themselves in successive waves of invasion upon the contracted world of Western Asia. Long before any date which is assignable to Abraham, these Semitic invaders had established themselves in Babylonia, absorbing or crowding southwards the earlier non-Semitic inhabitants.

The resultant civilization was a curious mingling of the progressive and the traditional, outwardly brilliant, spiritually dead. The absolute dominance of the priestly class throughout the compact social organization hampered and practically prevented religious progress.

The only clue which the Biblical historian furnishes to the exact date of Abraham is found in Genesis 14. If the Amraphel of verse 1 was the one who became the famous King Hammurabi of Babylon, it places Abraham not far from 2250 B. C. The Babylonia of that age was the leading country of its world. From every material point of view it furnished an ideal home for a

man of culture and wealth. The most adequate motive for forsaking it is the one which the Bible suggests. To one to whom the Divine was a precious reality the rigid polytheism of Babylonia would become intolerable. To such a one the relative freedom of the plains and hills of Aram and Canaan would be greatly prized, for there at least would be possible a simple and natural intercourse with God.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

Abraham's Unquestioning Obedience.

"Terah went from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there."—Gen. 11: 31. "And Abram took Sarai his wife, and went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came." —Gen. 12: 5.

In this short record of the movements of Terah and his son Abraham we recognize the Divine force which had entered into the life of the latter. He had heard the voice of Jehovah, and forsaking kindred and land had followed its counsel. Terah started with the same purpose, but failed to realize it. Abraham started for Canaan, and into the land of Canaan he came.

It is probable that this movement of Terah was one of spiritual discontent. Ur of the Chaldees was full of idols. Was the soul of this man hungering for the spiritual uplifting which it was impossible to find in his surroundings, and was it the wish to get away from the atmosphere of idolatry which led to his migration? Many a man with similar experiences has turned his back upon old associations with the hope of being better able to find the solace which seemed denied in the old environment.

Terah, however, did not go far enough. When he came to Haran he "dwelt there." What led to this change of purpose, we are not told. It may be that tempted by prospects of earthly gains, the spiritual voice was silenced. The experience is not unusual. Too

frequently the "silver mines" of Bunyan's dream cut short the journey of many. They turn aside and are heard of no more in the quest of life. After the death of Terah the distinct call came to his son Abraham, and he obeyed, going all the way.

Abraham's Loyalty to God.

In Gen. 12:1-3—God's command and promise to Abraham—we have revealed God's principle and purpose,—His selection of a man absolutely loyal to His commands, to whom the will of Jehovah would be the final test of life and character. Such is always the Divine principle of selection. The purpose of God in this choice was twofold: the creation of a nation through such a man; the blessing of all nations through such a nation. "I will make of thee a great nation . . . be thou a blessing: . . . in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

Abraham reveals the true ideal of life loyal to God. His immediate response to the call of Jehovah was indicative of the absolute submission of his will, without questioning, to the will of heaven. "Not knowing whither he went," he obeyed. The symbols of his life were the tent and the altar; the first indicating his readiness to be disturbed by Divine commands, the second his perpetual loyalty to God. Many an altar on which falls no heavenly flame is a monument of disobedience, instead of being the symbol of loyalty to Him who calleth. We might, if we were quick to hear, catch the cry, "This is not your resting place." The altar and the tent are the symbols of the consecrated life, waiting for the King's command.

Abraham's Frailties.

There are evidences, however, of the frailty even of so great a man as Abraham. Take his deceit about his wife in Egypt (Gen. 12:10-20). How disappointing is the record of this man chosen of God for the blessing of all nations of the earth! The faith which

triumphed in Haran and Canaan failed in Egyptian atmosphere. In the light of to-day Abraham's conduct is inexcusable. God saved what Abraham in his fearfulness nearly lost. This was an occasion when for the moment, under circumstances of extreme difficulty, he trusted rather to his diplomacy, than to God. Then again, his fear lest Eliezer of Damascus should be his heir (Gen. 15:2,3). It was a right fear in that such an event would have prevented the realization of the national idea. It was a wrong fear in that he did not wholly trust God. Again the whole story of the birth of Ishmael (Gen. ch. 16) is a revelation of faltering faith.

Against all these let the faithfulness of God be set in contrast. He brought him out of Egypt notwithstanding his folly. He gave him a great vision to silence his fears. And finally, He miraculously provided the seed for the fulfilment of His promise. In the failures of others, faith has demonstrated in its growth through the centuries, that nothing is impossible with God.

Lesson 2. ABRAHAM'S NOBILITY OF CHARACTER. His Kindness to Lot and Plea for Sodom. Scripture Section, Gen. chs. 13, 14; 18 : 1—19 : 29

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

The Advantages of Canaan as a Home.

The historical writers of the Bible set forth in many ways the conviction that all human history is but the outworking of the well-defined plan of God. The adjustment of the Hebrews, the religious teachers of mankind, to such a country as Canaan for their permanent home strikingly justified this belief. The land of Canaan was a highway of nations. The stream of traffic between Babylonia and Egypt, the two centers of culture, commerce and aggressive empire in the early centuries, was ever moving to and fro within easy ken of its inhabitants, enabling them to come in touch with the world's progress.

The topography of Canaan was quite as important as its situation. Its curious gridiron-like configuration made it also a land of privacy and seclusion where villages only a few miles apart might be wholly unrelated, where the population, with the Semitic instinct for individuality, often gave little heed to other than local interests. Canaan stood for safety no less than for stimulus.

Abraham's Loyalty to his Family.

The motive of the raid of the four kings, headed by Amraphel, upon the five kings near Sodom is found in the necessity for maintaining the regularity and security of the movement of Babylonian commerce. Its free course was quite essential to Babylonia's wealth and influence. Hence the prompt attack upon possible disturbers. Abraham's courageous pursuit of the expedition was due to the fact that his kinsman was among the captives.

The motive of kinship was all-powerful in that age. Society was organized on the basis of the clan. Any sacrifice was demanded of the individual which would benefit the group to which he was related by birth. It is interesting to notice how responsive Abraham is said to have been to the obligations of kinship. Not only did he exhibit high-mindedness, patience, thoughtfulness and courage in his dealings with his irresponsive, selfish kinsman; his representative character caused him to manifest a dignified friendliness and generous hospitality to all who met him, while anticipating an honorable and significant future for the family of which he had become the leader.

The Reality of Abraham's Faith.

The social setting given by the Biblical historian to the story of Abraham's later life is that of a wealthy and powerful nomadic chieftain. His household arrangements, his diplomatic methods, his dealings with individuals are such as we would expect from a tribal ruler of that day. It is along religious lines that he departs from the normal. The maturity and insight ascribed to him in his argument with God in Gen. ch. 18 would be worthy of a prophet with Jeremiah's experience and education. He not only affirms God's ethical perfection and sovereign power, but ventures to oppose his own judgment to that of God. How far this expresses the interpretation of the writer, no one can certainly determine. Abraham was a great religious leader, but it is unlikely that he was in any sense a theologian. He was rather one who stood in close and real relations with the Divine. In an age tending rapidly toward barren formalism in religion, he illustrated the freedom and the enthusiasm of genuine faith. Through his power of seeing that which is unseen and of dealing with that which is intangible, he helped to make God a living reality within the reach of the ordinary man. No greater service could be rendered by any human being to his fellowmen.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D. Northfield, Mass.

Abraham's Generosity to Lot.

This lesson affords a great illustration of the royalty of character built upon the principle of simple faith in God. Abraham returned from Egypt "very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold." But more precious than these was the faith which in his testing had sprung into being. The simple record is suggestive. "He went . . . unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning . . . unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first." This faith is witnessed:

1. In *Abraham's Generosity to Lot.* Prosperity had increased the difficulty of providing for their flocks, and with the increase of labor came the outbreak of discomfort and strife between the herdsmen. Faith in God made it possible for Abraham to be generous. With magnificent unselfishness he urged Lot to prevent strife by separating, gave him the first choice of suitable land, electing to take that which was rejected by Lot. The principle of Abraham's life was that he abandoned himself to God, having chosen the Divine choice, whatever it might be. The two men present a striking contrast. One absolutely surrendered his life and possessions to Jehovah, generous with the magnitude of a living faith; the other was selfish, thoughtless, ungracious.

The latter class never gives God a chance to work surprises, is always making the demonstrations of Divine succor impossible, responds to the greed of the eye, and ignores the impulses of the soul. Such men never make generous offers, they are always looking out for them.

2. In *Abraham's Rescue of Lot from the Four Kings.* This royalty of character is yet more forcefully manifested in the fact that when the man who chose for himself was in trouble, Abraham went to his help and gained the victory over his foes. The man who leaves

God out of the question in ordering his steps, walks in the dark. Sodom with all its sin and abomination blinded the vision of Lot, baffled his judgment, fooled his soul. Toward that city he pitched his tent, but we do not read of the erection of an altar. He maintained the tent, indicating his preparedness for immediate removal, but the next step is that he entered the city and dwelt there.

In Gen. 14:1-12 we read of the four kings who combined and made war upon Sodom and Gomorrah. "And they took Lot . . . who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed." If Lot had become conscious of the selfish advantage taken over Abraham, no evidence is recorded of any betrayal of remorse. But the consciousness of his greed, and the calamity which followed must have been eloquent witness against his folly. With the magnanimity of soul peculiar to men of faith, Abraham pursued the invaders, scattered their forces, rescued the captives, and brought them back in triumph to their homes.

3. In *Abraham's Plea for Sodom.* The superlative manifestation of the royalty of character comes however, when the guilty cities were threatened with Divine judgment. Abraham is seen pleading for them face to face with God. With the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah Abraham had nothing in common. The atmosphere of the cities was pregnant with iniquity. Yet when judgment was threatened, the faith which obeyed Jehovah, dared to plead with Him to spare the sinners. It is the man of faith that weeps over the cities in their infatuation and folly. The character faith creates does not wish for judgment, but cries for mercy.

Side by side with his revelation of the royalty of faith again notice carefully what God is able to do with such a man. (*a*) When Lot's choice was made, God chose for Abraham. With our limitations we see only to the boundary of to-day. There is no veil before

the eyes of Jehovah. We grasp at the unreal. God holds for us the everlasting. (*b*) When Abraham's victory was gained, God sent forth Melchizedek to minister to him. Angels minister always to the faith that triumphs in God's name. (*c*) When Abraham pleaded for Sodom, it was because God had taken him into confidence about the coming judgment, and God is seen listening to, and reasoning with, this man of faith.

Lesson 3. ABRAHAM'S LOYALTY TO GOD. His Obedience regarding Isaac. Scripture Section, Gen. 21 : 1 — 25 : 11

I. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

The Naturalness of the Portrait of Abraham.

No one can deny that if the portraiture of Abraham in Genesis is the product, or largely so, of the loving imagination of a reverent Hebrew historian of a much later age, his task was admirably done, with accuracy in details, with proportion and cleverness. The portrait is to the life. With a reasonable allowance for figurative or rhetorical expression, the narrative does not set forth an impossible man, but one who is normal, the sort of personality which God selects for leadership in all ages, who represents not merely the tendencies or foibles or shortcomings of his age, but also its possibilities and its inspirations.

The episodes to which particular attention is paid in this lesson furnish an excellent illustration. Both in the attempted sacrifice of Isaac and in the choice of Rebekah for Isaac's wife we may note the action natural to a high-minded man, distinguished alike for

his devotion to God and his belief in the future of his family, or clan.

Ancient customs, as revealed by such reliable authority as the recently discovered law code of Hammurabi, gave to the natural head of a clan or family an almost absolute power over all its members. The necessities of community life, particularly the maintenance of uniform laws and of settled conditions, gave certain limits to such power; but among the peoples who spent their lives in roaming from one favorite pasturage to another there was practically no restraint, save that imposed by tradition, upon the will of the acknowledged chief. The right of Abraham to put his son to death would not be questioned.

The love of the Semite for the human group to which he belonged was very marked, far outweighing his instinct for nationality. Posterity was his supreme desire. While ancient custom recognized his right to have children by his female slaves, yet the most precious possession which a man of influence and outlook could possibly have was a son and heir by his principal, free-born wife. As a test of Abraham's devotedness to God nothing could surpass his deliberate consecration of such a son. Nor was it unnatural. The Semitic mind is intense; it proceeds readily to extremes; it longs to put into concrete expression the loyalty of which it is conscious. In Abraham's day the sacrifice of a first-born son was the accepted token of absolute obedience to God among the environing peoples.

Clan loyalty fully explains the marriage of Isaac to one of his kindred. Wherever the unit of society is the clan, marriages are guarded with care and limited, as far as possible, to those who are akin. The marriage of the heir of the chief would be expected both to further the sense of clan unity and to promote the continuance of its political and social traditions. To take for Isaac a Canaanitish bride would be to forego the advantages of the removal from Babylonia.

The Evidence of Abraham's Historical Existence.

The details of Abraham's life as given in the Bible are historically accurate. While this creates a presumption in favor of the personal existence of the patriarch, it does not of necessity shut out other possible interpretations of the Scripture narrative. The use made of proper names in Genesis, for instance, is so varied that many scholars interpret the patriarchal lineage as the personification of the gradual aggregation of related clans into a loose tribal confederation. Corroborative evidence for any interpretation cannot be expected from outside sources. No extra Biblical references to such a man as Abraham have been found, or ever will be. To the annalists of his age—chroniclers of the doings of kings—he would be insignificant or unknown.

The real historical argument is this: conditions never create themselves. The people whom Moses led out of Egypt were worth delivering because of tendencies and traditions which linked them to God in a healthy and hopeful relationship. Nothing so adequately explains the usableness of the Hebrews for divine purposes as the stamp placed upon them as a race by their great progenitor and pioneer. The book of Genesis unquestionably contains much racial geography under the guise of family enlargement, but along with its broad declarations of a racial affinity between groups of foreigners who invaded Canaan and settled there, should stand its affirmation of a personal religious leadership of one of these groups which widely differentiates it from the others.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

Abraham's Faith Triumphant.

In this lesson we see Abraham in two supreme tests of his loyalty to God upon the basis of faith.

1. *His attempted sacrifice of Isaac.* All his hopes were centred upon this only son. Through him Abraham looked for the fulfilment of Jehovah's promise. The lad was the living witness of His supremacy over finite "impossibilities." Yet when Abraham was called to offer him to God as a burnt offering, immediately he obeyed, and went forward on the journey. We can understand the sadness of that obedience but we are appalled by the sublimity of the faith. This faith is revealed supremely in what he said to the young men who accompanied him and Isaac. "I and the lad will go yonder; and we will worship and come again to you" (Gen. 22:5). The verb "worship" here is plural, and so also is the verb "come again." Thus it is evident that Abraham believed that God would fulfil the promise even though He had to raise Isaac to life again after he had been offered. That this is true is borne out by the words of the writer of the letter to the Hebrews (Heb. 11 : 19).

2. *The sending for Rebekah.* This is a picture of faith acting within the realm of reason. Appreciation of God's will does not exclude the exercise of common sense. It is no evidence of faith to be dependent upon signs and miracles to know what God would have us do. Abraham knew that separation from idolatrous peoples was the will of God, and faith acted reasonably in taking steps to arrange for such a marriage for Isaac as should fulfil the Divine intention. An alliance with an idolatrous house must not prevent Jehovah's purpose. Abraham reasoned out the question, and solved the problem to the satisfaction of his own judgment, then acted in the faith that God would direct the issue of his endeavor. How that reasonable faith was recognized by Jehovah the union between Isaac and Rebekah demonstrated.

The great lessons from these two incidents are: (1) When faith cannot reason, it acts simply in obedience. Many are the commands of God which baffle

our judgment. Along the path which He commands us to tread, oftentimes no light of human reason can dispel the darkness. The thick cloud, obscurity, impenetrable blackness, defy the exercise of any faculty but that of faith. Then it is that knowing His will, we go forth in the confidence that He knoweth the way that we take. The sublime trust in the unerring judgment of God brings the benediction of omnipotent support, guidance, victory.

(2) When there is open to faith a door of reasonable action it always avails itself thereof. Here how many err, confusing things which are different. Indiscretion is not a sign of confidence. To put faith in such conduct does not change the character of foolish deeds. Reasonable faith prevents them. By much that is called faith God is no more honored than men are helped. To substitute "zeal without knowledge" for reasonable faith based upon the known will of God necessitates a miracle to prevent a calamity, or brings confusion and defeat. Understand the will of God. Do it, and we shall know when the door of reasonable action stands open before us. Into the service of faith, learn from Abraham's triumph to bring mind and heart into co-operation with the mind and heart of God. Let knowledge and confidence enrich your faith and magnify the Lord of hosts.

Lesson 4. JACOB'S FLIGHT TO HARAN. His Dishonorable Conduct toward Esau. Scripture Section, Gen. 25 : 19—28 : 22

I. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

The Skill of Biblical Biographers.

It has been well said by a distinguished Biblical scholar that there is in the historical writings a wealth of beauty and religious instruction for those students who approach them with the higher appreciation and insight of those who are trained to study the historian's art of representation, to seek for the motive which may have led him to select and arrange his data as we find them and to interpret his production as a natural whole and from the writer's point of view. Such students find the patriarchal narratives fascinating and, above all others, the story of Jacob. It illustrates what Prof. Moulton aptly terms the "epic" element in the historical narratives of the Old Testament, by which he means the element added by the constructive imagination of a reverent writer, the element which stimulates into activity the reader's own power of vivid realization of an age or an episode or a character. A skilful historian suggests far more than he says. He sketches outlines which his readers fill in. Only as they seek to interpret his narrative from his own standpoint and with friendly enthusiasm, do they receive his real message.

Jacob a Prototype of the People of Israel.

The story of Jacob is a study of character, portrayed with great skill in picturesque detail. The writer without doubt believed that he was describing an actual personality, and yet his chief interest did not lie in the historical situation in which Jacob played a part, but in the description of Jacob as a spiritual type, a nature rescued by wholesome discipline from its lower self and aided to struggle up to self-mastery and power.

It has been frequently noted that the portrait of Jacob thus produced is a lifelike personification of the typical son of Israel, only heightened by the incidental contrast with the portraiture of Esau. Both in the qualities which repel us and in the nobler gifts of which he gave ample evidence, he represents the race. Hence Cornill, who recognizes Abraham as a "strictly historical personage," regards "Edom and Israel" as "only personifications and representatives of the races whose names they bear." But sober scholarship holds to the historicity of the broad outlines of these sketches, while conceding freely that their writers so filled in these outlines supplied by tradition as to present forcibly and instructively the religious value of each personality, and his embodiment of the racial ideals. It is of the first importance that a reader of the Old Testament should see the propriety and significance of such a use of traditional data. It converts mere memoranda into inspiring and stimulating narratives; it enables facts to preach.

Jacob is drawn to the life. With no other portrait in Scripture, unless it be that of Peter, do we feel more at home. From few others do we derive as much help. Jacob's selfishness, shrewdness, cunning and deceitfulness were but the earlier manifestations of a nature of great native force wholly absorbed in itself. There are many such men to-day, and they are not beyond reclamation.

Light on Early Conditions.

The story of Jacob up to his experience at Beth-el is full of interesting reminders of the social and religious ideas of that early age. The inviolability of the blessing once secured, even fraudulently, the importance ascribed to the birthright of the firstborn son, the belief that where the heavenly vision had been seen God would appear most readily again and the impulse to set up a rude memorial stone—all take the reader back to the days of simplicity.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

Jacob's Character a Perplexing Problem.

There is much to perplex us in the story of Jacob's life. He stands forth in those first years as the antithesis of Abraham. Indeed, there is more to remind us of Lot in his selfishness than of the founder of Israel in his faith. It is impossible in the early stages of Jacob's career to discover the "absolute loyalty" upon which God alone could make a great nation, and through which to bless all the families of the earth. The man stands out apparently destitute of the faith which expresses itself in ability to wait, and determination to obey. He was consumed by the meanest ambitions, and a stranger to brotherly love.

The faithfulness of God, however, cannot suffer change by the faithlessness of man; and the story of Jacob's life emphasizes Jehovah's faithfulness to His covenant with Abraham. God's word cannot be broken, and His purpose cannot be changed; but ungodly schemes, like the hope of the ungodly, must perish. This story vindicates this truth. God is not compromised. He cannot be mocked. He works; and who can prevent?

Speaking in purely human terms, we should say that in the two sons of Isaac, the Almighty was face to face with a terrible difficulty. Neither of them was in himself admirable or trustworthy. Of the two, Jehovah chose Jacob. The reason for this choice lay in the Divine foreknowledge of the character of these two men. In that knowledge, not only are their present characteristics measured, but their possible developments; and when put into contrast with each other, notwithstanding all the meanness of Jacob, there can be no question of his superiority to Esau, concerning whom the New Testament in one flaming characterization tells the whole story: that "profane person" (Heb. 12 : 16).

This much needs to be said, but no more, as our subject is not a comparison of the men, but a consideration of Jacob.

Jacob's Dishonorable Treatment of Esau.

The present lesson, dealing as it does with his dishonorable treatment of Esau, reveals the character of the man with great clearness. He believed in God, and in the Divine purpose of blessing. He moreover accepted the Divine method of separating a people from the corrupt nations, and did not violate the covenant by intermarriage with such as did Esau.

His confidence, however, was not that of the simple and obedient trust of Abraham. Jacob acted as though it were necessary for him by diplomacy and duplicity to help forward the Divine purpose of blessing. He was a great opportunist, and with his eye fixed on, and his heart desiring, the issues in harmony with the declared purpose of Jehovah, he attempted by cunning and policy to hasten results.

While the animalized character of Esau is revealed in his willingness to sell a birthright for the satisfaction of his hunger, Jacob's meanness flashes out in his being willing to take advantage of this very degradation of his brother to obtain it.

Again, later he adopted, in counsel with his mother, methods that controverted the whole genius of godliness, in the deceit he practised upon his father to obtain possession of his blessing. The story stands unparalleled for duplicity. Motherhood and brotherhood were dishonored, and the anger of Esau justly kindled.

We should ever be careful to notice that these methods did not help forward, but rather hindered and retarded, the fulfilment of the Divine purpose. An exile from home for at least twenty years with all the bitter experiences of a distant land, was the harvest which he reaped.

When man in self-centred pride thinks that he is equal to helping forward the purposes of God, he is

ever preparing for himself experiences of sorrow and pain, and postponing rather than hastening the accomplishment of Divine purpose.

God's Way the Best Way.

Man cannot force the hand of God. There is no short cut to the attainment of Jehovah's purpose that man can discover. God's way, however dark, is best. Many bear witness that however dark the path ordered by the Lord may seem to be, it is bright compared with that into which pride leads astray. There is need for the prayer, "Thy way, not mine, O Lord."

God's appearance to Jacob on his way to the land of Laban is a radiant revelation of the Divine faithfulness and determination to fulfil His purpose in spite of all human failure. What God means to do, comes to pass.

In this we find consolation. Our hope in the promise of blessing and faith in the purpose of the Lord are maintained not by our own strength and fidelity, but by the fact that He cannot fail, for His word abideth forever.

Lesson 5. JACOB'S RETURN TO CANAAN. His Changed Character. Scripture Section, Gen. chs. 29—33, 35

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

The Real Jacob.

The story of Jacob, as we have it handed down, is a skilful emphasis of the Divine method of discipline in case of a richly endowed and promising, yet untrained and misdirected, personality. It requires no depth of insight to see the relative value of a Jacob as contrasted with the fickle, short-sighted, unpractical Esau, far as our sympathies carry us in the latter's favor. Nor do we regret the incidental lessons in sharp practice administered to the crafty Laban by one far more clever than he. The writer's sympathies were with Jacob, yet rather with Jacob who emerged after discipline into a nobler type of life, guided by a richer sense of subordination to God, than with the cunning, resourceful, audacious man who lived by his wit. He shows us with a few bold strokes how the larger, broader life came to be.

His Struggle With God.

The story of the wrestling at Peniel must always be a puzzle to the reader who demands a literal explanation of each detail. That this mysterious experience by night on the river bank alone marked the turning-point in Jacob's career has often been noted. That it was in actual fact a struggle of his soul with God, to whom he finally submitted, is the outstanding truth. It has historical significance in a sense not often mentioned. What other writer than a Hebrew would have dared to portray in this bold fashion a struggle between the Almighty and a man. Just because the Hebrew had grasped the relationship between God and man as one of co-operation and mutual freedom, he could picture a man as fighting with God in a struggle which was

not altogether ludicrous, since God would be reluctant to use his unquestionable power.

The Details of His Life With Laban.

The story of Jacob's discipline is crowded with details of archæological interest. The boundary covenant and the stone or cairn which commemorated it, find frequent illustration in ancient records. Landmarks were sacred and protected by Divine sanctions even in the case of neighboring farms or villages. Even in Babylonia, where written deeds were as common as among us to-day, this visible token of property limits was in almost universal use. As regards the incidents of Jacob's marriages and years of service as a shepherd, missionaries from the Levant often comment upon the curious faithfulness to the customs of Bedouin life which the narratives exhibit. The prejudices, conventions, speech, habits, manners—all are to the life—and show that the writers had every intention of sketching, with accuracy and sympathy, a set of real personalities. Jacob's relationship gave him a welcome, but did not protect him from sharp dealing. His marriage with Leah, once accomplished, could not be repudiated, yet did not hinder his pursuit of Rachel. Being without the means of giving their father an adequate bride-price, Jacob proposed to work it out as a servant without other wages than his support. He could not detect the trick of substitution because of the custom of closely veiling the bride, who was, in all probability, even in the case of Leah, only a young girl. The names of the children were expressive of the events or ideas connected with their birth and might have been altered, on similar occasion, in later life, as readily as his own. A name in the East has significance rather than stability. It is likely to have some sort of meaning.

The Twelve Tribes.

In recent years a question has been raised regarding the purpose of the writer in describing the birth and actions of the twelve sons and one daughter of Jacob

from his two wives and two concubines. Some regard the story as historical and conclude that these sons were ancestors of the tribes which were called by their names. Others, dwelling upon the unquestionable personification in Genesis, here and there, of tribes and nations (ch. 10), interpret this family history as a vivid way of describing, in Oriental fashion, the gradual aggregation into one body of the clans which historically became known as sons of Israel. The problem is not readily solvable, nor is it of fundamental importance to determine the exact boundary line between fact and figure.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

Jacob in Haran.

There is no doubt truth in the statement that environment has much to do with the formation of character. It is equally true that a man's character is not changed merely by the change of environment. Jacob at Haran was the same man who, as a fugitive, fled from Canaan. We see the same characteristics manifesting themselves in his dealings with Laban. It is not place, but grace, which enables a man to say "old things are passed away."

Yet again if we simply contrast the two men, Jacob and Laban, Jacob is certainly the superior character. Laban is a type of the mean man who will take advantage of godliness in others for increasing his own material wealth.

Whatever we may think of Jacob's godliness, there is a sub-consciousness of God's purpose restraining and constraining him. He never loses sight of the hope of the covenant of God, for his sin is not unbelief in the attainment of that promise, but impatient, imprudent efforts to force the fulfilment. Consequently Laban takes advantage of his convictions and makes them serve his own purpose.

Through all the long years of exile, Jacob is seen as

the man keen, shrewd, astute, managing everything, pressing contradictory circumstances into his service, determined to overcome in the sheer strength of his own capacity for manipulating events. Magnificent as this quality of character may be, it has its limitations. It cannot work the miracles of faith, hence it knows nothing of the experience which goes from strength to strength. Jacob under any circumstances God-ordained, would have found undisturbed peace; but with all his determination of character, peace was a stranger to his soul.

Jacob Facing His Past History.

At last, tired with the conditions of his service, he breaks from Laban, and starts back for his own country. And now the old difficulties confront him. What memories are awakened! The mean mistakes of the past come up before him, and he realizes that the supreme difficulty in the way of his entering into that which is God's purpose for him, is one which was created by his attempt to ensure to himself the blessing designed for him. Esau stands out in his vision threatening revenge; and the anger of that brother, robbed of his father's blessing, sends disturbing fears to Jacob's soul. Read the preparation which Jacob makes for the meeting of Esau. He "was greatly afraid and distressed." He begins to understand his own limitations, and the discovery inspires the prayer, "O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac. . . . Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother. . . . for I fear him." And then as a last resort he spends the night alone.

Jacob at Peniel.

We have no clear statement as to the reason obtaining in the mind of Jacob for his staying behind by the brook, but it is more than probable that he remained for meditation and prayer. He was baffled. His own

strength of character failed to sustain him, and possibly remembering God's deliverance from Laban's anger, he sought the power "mighty to save."

It is now that God in the person of the supernatural visitor, takes hold of him, and finally teaches him his own weakness by overcoming him in physical conflict. It is an utterly erroneous idea to suppose that Jacob overcame at the brook, as he had done elsewhere, by the sheer force of will and character. It was at the moment when, conscious of defeat, and when the hard determined man was melted to tears, and cried out in sobs, that he reached the point of victory. The prophet Hosea gives us the key to the situation (Hosea 12 : 4).

Faith in God which yet is so weak as to express itself in self-confidence, gains no victories, and procures no blessings. But for the final fulfilment of Divine purposes, God has to take hold of a man in such condition, and by crippling him, break down his self-confidence, that his dependence may be wholly upon Himself.

Lesson 6. JOSEPH THE FAVORITE SON. The Jealousy of His Brethren. Scripture Section, Gen. chs. 37, 39

I. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

Joseph, a Universal Type.

Long ago it was pointed out by Professor Dods that the personality ascribed to Joseph is the most broadly representative one portrayed in the book of Genesis, combining the strong and characteristic qualities of each of his great predecessors into one forceful and harmonious whole. If Jacob was a typical Israelite, Joseph may fairly be said to illustrate the broader ideals which represent humanity. His biographer rejoiced to point out the fact that Joseph was as true a success in Egypt among a strange people and made his influence felt as far as could have been the case among his own kindred. This breadth of type accounts for the many points of view from which the story of Joseph is suggestive of that One who fully exhibited humanity's true and permanent possibilities.

Men who attain to the most complete development in manhood are often less balanced in their youth. The very qualities which become of sterling value when duly checked and balanced by other strong tendencies seem otherwise when exercised alone. The absolute self-mastery and confidence, born of shrewd insight and of a sense of power, which was essential to Joseph the ruler of Egypt, must have seemed exasperating and presumptuous in Joseph, the youngest lad of a large family, who calmly recounted visions of his own supremacy over them all. It is not strange that his brothers harbored a spirit of jealous hatred. He was quite out of the usual run of personalities.

His Period Well Known.

With the times of Joseph one approaches more closely to a well-known historical period, the details of which are fairly at command. No one, it is true, can

exactly identify the meagre and very general data of the story of Joseph with any particular reign in Egypt, yet the general historical conditions with which they are in consonance can be located. While Egypt was always a place of refuge, after a fashion, for nomadic peoples in distress, such a rise into power as Joseph experienced would be much more probable in the days of the Hyksos than under the pure Egyptian dynasties which preceded and followed them.

With the traditions which describe a residence in Egypt one approaches also a firmer standing-ground for the beginnings of Israelitish history. It is agreed by the vast majority of students that a reasonable explanation of these persistent and distinctive traditions establishes the residence in Egypt not only of the "children of Joseph," but of the representative body of Israelites. Recent discoveries seem to prove that some of the people afterward known as Israelites were living during this time in Canaan, but such discoveries merely indicate that the Biblical narrator made no attempt to give the minutely detailed history of the Israelitish nation, but rather drew attention to its most important developments. This principle of selection of material for a certain purpose is an exceedingly important one. It is the method of the Bible, and explains much that is otherwise almost inexplicable.

Three Pertinent Facts.

That it was easy and customary for the inhabitants of Canaan and the South to drift into Egypt, the pictorial records on Egyptian tombs and the clever tales in Egyptian records give witness. Not infrequently a group of tribesmen passed over in times of stress to remain until they bettered, being granted the privilege either under regularly understood conditions or by obtaining the favor of the governor of the border district. All roads led toward the Nile.

No unimportant reason for this was the steady stream of caravan traffic southward through Canaan from the

regions beyond the Euphrates or straight across the desert from the regions east and south of the gulf of Aqabah. As far back as historical records run, these roads were traveled by the hardy and adventurous traders, who formed the living links between the dominant civilization of that early age. These traders were never unwilling to turn an honest penny by an unforeseen speculation of the beginnings of which they would not be over curious.

Joseph's misfortune was in large part due to his injudicious recounting of his dreams. One broad difference between antiquity and to-day is the deference which in earlier times was paid to dreams. The wisest and most conservative among men attached great significance to them, and dwelt upon their minutest detail. To ignore them seemed irreligious. Joseph's brethren did not laugh him down, but were filled with bitter envy at the future unveiled before him.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

Joseph, the Favorite Son.

This lesson bristles with possibilities of application. One might dwell on the fondness and the folly of Jacob's favoritism; or on the evil and envy of his sons; or yet again on the innocence and ingenuousness of Joseph.

The subjects of supreme importance, however, are: First, that of the wonderful overruling of God in the history of this man; and secondly, that of the fitness of the man for the purposes of God.

God's Overruling Providence.

With regard to the first subject, the lesson is not complete in itself, subsequent ones being necessary to show the ultimate meaning of all that is here chronicled. To look ahead for one moment, the history of Joseph ends with the settlement of the nation in comfort and security in the land of Goshen. There can be very little doubt that towards that end God was mov-

ing. Already there were signs of the danger of the chosen nation losing its note of separateness by mixture with all the evil existing in Canaan. In order that they might be preserved from such admixture, they were removed from Canaan, and spent long years in a country where they were guarded from admixture by the very severity of the caste system of the Egyptians.

In this lesson we have the first links in the great chain of Divine procedure. It is but to state them in sequence to see how they are moving toward the consummation. Joseph is born of Rachel, therefore he is specially loved by his father. On account of this he is envied by the sons of Leah. The outcome of this is his selling into slavery. He finds his way into Potiphar's house. There he has to meet with subtle temptation, and at the close of this lesson we find him in prison. Notice how through natural sequence—Jacob's love for Joseph; the evil passions in the heart of his brethren; and by unlikely coincidences, his arrival at the house of Potiphar; and through fierce temptation, and by the way of calamity, his casting into prison—God is moving slowly but surely onward toward the fulfilment of His purpose.

Happy are we when we are able to rest in the assurance that over all and through all possible contingencies and circumstances, God moves at the impulse of love toward the accomplishment of some high purpose.

Joseph's Fitness for His Work.

With regard to the second subject, that of the man around whom the Divine action centred for the realization of purpose, notice how he was fitted by temperament and character, prepared by suffering and temptation, sustained by the Divine presence.

TEMPERAMENT. (*a*) *Visionary.* The mystic quality which gave him visions and enabled him to interpret them.

(*b*) *Ingenuous.* Candid in speech, a hater of dissimulation. Noble in his intense love of integrity.

(*c*) *Tactful.* All his ability as a statesman. His

management in office, and his dealing with his brethren.

CHARACTER. (*a*) *Clean.* Strong in purity. No guilty defilement of conscience. Walking continually in the light.

(*b*) *Honest.* With scrupulous care discharging the duties of those whom he served. Faithful to men, because faithful to God.

(*c*) *Determined.* No weakling, but vigorous and strong. Understanding God's purpose in his life, his ideal never vanishes; he presses forward toward the goal.

Thus fitted by temperament and character Joseph is prepared for the Divine purpose by suffering and temptation.

The hatred of his brethren—slavery and exile—the influences of Egypt, with its heathen atmosphere, the subtle temptations of Potiphar's house, misrepresentations and slanderous charges, degradation inflicted, and imprisonment—these were the steps along the path of preparation. But in the darkest of his experiences he was sustained by the Divine presence. "The Lord was with Joseph" (Gen. 39 : 2).

Is it not always so? The pure in heart see the vision of visions, hear unspeakable words, suffer persecutions, are tempted and tried; but ages vindicate the truth that "underneath are the everlasting arms." Let us learn the lesson that—

God chooses fit men.
God fits chosen men.

With these qualities the purposes of God are fulfilled in us.

Lesson 7 JOSEPH THE INTERPRETER OF DREAMS. The Beginning of His Greatness. Scripture Section, Gen. 40: 1—41: 36

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

Slavery in Egypt.

That a slave boy of foreign birth should attain a position of responsibility and authority in the household of an Egyptian of exalted rank would occasion no surprise even in the Egypt of to-day. In such a country as ancient Egypt, where the sale of captives taken in war was a common occurrence, the enslavement of men of great capacity and of good blood was quite possible. Such men, if not embittered by their sad misfortune to the point of hopelessness, soon found places of relative usefulness. The sting of slavery lay in the absolute control of the owner. He could pamper or torment; he could take life or make it, according to his humor. Under humane and thoughtful masters the lot of the slave was no worse than that of the average man, yet the despotic power of the owner made possible such a sudden reversal of status as that which befell Joseph, and thus fed the longing of every slave for freedom.

The Pharaoh's Despotic Power.

The social and political theory at the root of early development regarded the god as the owner and lord of the land wherein he was worshipped, and accepted the king, his vicegerent, as the one who exercised this absolute authority. The persons, the property, and the lives of his subjects were at the king's disposal. He governed on the assumption that his will was national law and his pleasure national success. To awaken his wrath was to deserve a speedy death. The sudden degradation of the royal officers, one of them, the cupbearer, being, probably, the king's intimate and trusted associate, and the equally sudden disposal of their cases, one being restored to all his former dignities, the other

summarily executed, were incidents only too common under that system of absolutism.

Joseph's Capableness.

Joseph's opportunity came to him by reason of his skill as an interpreter of dreams, but he grasped it by exhibiting an intelligent mastery of the situation revealed by them and proposing a practicable scheme for meeting the emergency. Two more effective reasons for rapid advancement antiquity could hardly furnish. They proved Joseph to be the sort of exceptional man for whom a despot is always on the lookout. He had the gift of insight and was shrewd and clever as well. The monuments of Egypt give evidence that the rise of foreigners to positions of political distinction was entirely possible, and almost always for some such reason.

The Pharaoh Who Exalted Joseph.

In trying to determine the date of these events one is confronted by a double difficulty. The story of Joseph is a genuine story of the highest class, and consequently particularity in historical detail is subordinated to dramatic or literary values. The author's purpose was to brng out in relief the character of Joseph and to profoundly interest his readers in the remarkable fulfilment of his early premonitions. Again, the Joseph story seems to be a unit by itself, and to have assumed literary form centuries after the occurrence of the facts. The data for determining the dynasty under which Joseph came to power are very indeterminate. They hardly justify Sayce's downright assertion that the Egypt of our narrative is that of the Hyksos. The customs described are too universal to identify any specific age.

It has, however, often been urged that, under the new empire, at least, which followed the expulsion of the Hyksos, the hatred for foreigners from the East was so intense that such an elevation as that which Joseph experienced would be very unlikely, while, on the other hand, his quick acceptance by a Hyksos sovereign

would be easy and natural. This argument has real historical value. The Hyksos were Asiatic invaders who held possession of Egypt, according to Manetho, for about five hundred years. They quickly became to all intents and purposes Egyptianized. Yet, as Maspero suggests, they need not have lost completely either their own language or the knowledge of their real extraction. More than once would the gates of the royal palace have opened to Asiatic counsellors and favorites. A comparatively ancient tradition identifies the Pharaoh of Joseph with Apophis, one of the later Hyksos kings. This is based, however, not upon Egyptian data, but upon a series of calculations founded on Biblical data.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

Joseph, the Interpreter of Dreams.

Our present lesson moves forward along the same lines as the former one. Again we see the importance of character as affording opportunity for the revelation of divine interest in human affairs. In this story of Joseph's interpretation of dreams we see the overruling of God, and the man ready to His hand. Prepared men always demonstrate God to the world. Through them vision is given to the multitude, and explanations of events come, which prove that the Lord reigneth. Amid the confusion of conflicting experiences, life becomes to many an impenetrable mystery. The world owes much to the prepared man whose faith reveals the Divine purpose, and inspires confidence in the goodness of the Lord.

How wondrous is God in the methods of His going! There is no avenue of human life through which He cannot enter to arrest attention and to communicate a purpose.

Here we see Him making use of dreams, and thus entering a realm which even until this hour of scientific progress, is full of mystery to the mind of man.

There need be no time taken to debate the question as to whether these dreams were of God. Belief in God is belief in the possibility of His using dreams. The common experiences of man that dreams have in all human history so often influenced him, renders it probable also that God may speak thus. Surely Elihu was right when he said:

> "God speaketh once,
> Yea, twice, though man regardeth it not,
> In a dream, in a vision of the night,
> When deep sleep falleth upon men,
> In slumberings upon the bed."

In these movements of God there is absolutely no respect of persons, for prisoners and a Pharaoh alike are troubled by dreams that the purposes of the Most High may move forward.

It is, however, important to remember that these men are not the men who understand the meaning of the Divine movements. God constantly speaks and men are troubled. Unrest and wonder fill their souls, but they have no explanation with which to solve the mystery. The prepared man must put into human speech the purposes of the Almighty, and reveal to us the continuity of the Divine guidance. In this character Joseph served Egypt. In this light he stands forth before all ages.

Taking up the lines noticed in the last lesson, we have here still others to add to them. The man in prison finds favor; he is put in charge of the butler and the baker, who are directly associated with the court. In this arrangement Joseph had again the evidence that the Lord was with him. Personal experience of that presence must voice God's nearness to man, otherwise pronouncements carry no inspiration. They lack the ring of "I know." The charm of Joseph's life is seen in his immovable consciousness of the abiding presence. The charge of Pharaoh's prisoners was to him a Divine

appointment, and made possible the interpretation of their dreams.

Yet notice how long a time elapses before the next providential movement. Two years of waiting in prison before Pharaoh's dream was the sound of the moving again of the wheels of the chariot of God.

From these things we learn how sure and perfectly adjusted are all the dispensations of Providence; and yet also learn that it is our wisdom to wait quietly, for there is ofttimes an element of delay, which we cannot understand, but becoming restless under which we may fail to make connection. "My Lord delayeth His coming" is the cry of collapse.

Turning to the man fitted for Divine use, we see him first triumphing over circumstances in faith, winning favor in prison, living in such personal relation to God as to be able to interpret dreams. Yet note carefully that he emphatically attributes to God the honor of these revelations. And finally when standing before Pharaoh we see a man so independent of men in his dependence upon God as to be ready to offer counsel to the king, even though he be but a prisoner.

The lessons are obvious and valuable. Faith triumphs over all adverse circumstances, ignoring them in the deeper consciousness of the government of God. Thus faith catches the forces which contribute to the making of life and does the will of God.

Contrast the faithfulness of God with man's forgetfulness. "The butler forgat Joseph." God remembered His servant.

Lesson 8. JOSEPH THE PRIME MINISTER. His Exaltation in Egypt. Scripture Section, Gen. 41: 37—42: 38

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

Joseph's Exaltation.

It was a startling transformation from Joseph, the trusted slave in the prison, to Joseph, the great lord, the second in authority in the land of Egypt, but such dramatic reversals of fortune are not infrequent in countries where the will of the sovereign is his subjects' law. Joseph's good fortune was due to no accident except that of opportunity. It was his remarkable powers of interpretation, supported by the valuable qualities of foresight, sagacity, decision and fertility of resource, and commended by a very attractive personality that won for him his honors. The last mentioned asset was not the least in value. Like David and Nehemiah after him, the personal charm of Joseph helped him to gain a standing with those in power.

Probably no class of people ever lived who were more proud and exclusive, more jealous of their privileges, more scrupulous along fixed lines than the Egyptian nobility. It was not enough that Joseph should be invested with the royal signet ring and be clothed in choice garments, such as men of rank were accustomed to wear, and be decorated with a golden collar, and honored by titles and dignities; his name was changed to one of Egyptian form, and by marriage he was introduced into a priestly family, thus becoming a legitimatized member of the aristocracy of Egypt. Such an adoption was not infrequent, but it took place most readily and naturally in the case of a captive of good blood and breeding, who was one of nature's noblemen.

The Famine.

The crisis which established Joseph's authority and influence was a long-continued famine. In a country

so dependent as Egypt upon the annual overflow of its great river, a single failure of the fertilizing and saturating flood brought about a failure of the crops for that year. A series of such failures is extraordinary, yet the Egyptian records show that famines of several years' duration have taken place.

It does not become a fair interpreter of the story of Joseph to lay too much stress upon its details. The extension of the famine to Canaan affords a sufficient reason for the coming of the deputation to Egypt to buy provision from the great lord in charge of the royal granaries. The narrative, however, suggests to the reader that ten men came together, each with one sack, which he took back to Canaan laden with grain, borne by an ass. These ten sacks contained the provender for the pack animals (42 : 27), as well as the means of subsistence for the tribe. These details of course cannot have been literally exact. With the brethren would have come a small caravan, each man in charge of several animals and aided by attendants. The art of the writer draws attention away from such minor details to the direct association of the ten brethren with Joseph. He and they are isolated from all other actors, and made to occupy the foreground.

The Charge Against the Brethren.

When ushered into the presence of the dread lord of the granaries the brethren heard themselves accused as spies and enemies. It was not an absurd charge. The northeast border of Egypt was ever a danger line, closely guarded by the authorities. Even within the proper confines of the empire there was constant need of watchfulness, since the Hyksos kings were never allowed to become unconscious of the hostile attitude of the native kings who held their own in the extreme south, remaining quiescent or combative as wisdom might direct, but always watchful. Under conditions such as these, a conscientious, unprejudiced, clear-headed officer of administrative capacity was a Godsend.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

Joseph, the Prime Minister.

We have seen a man of faith in probation and in prison. Now we see him in power. In each condition we observe the thoroughness of his steadfastness. No fluctuations of confidence in adversity, no unseemly boasting in prosperity, he stands apparently unchanged, ready for every emergency, willing for any service. Much that is called faith lacks responsiveness except for agreeable enterprises, and consequently misses the opportunities which give fullest scope for manifesting strength. The principles of life are not altered by the alteration of circumstances. The overruling God is seen in the decision of Pharaoh to set Joseph in authority, and in the famine and its effect of bringing the sons of Jacob to Egypt. In the final analysis of life, all men and movements are answering the Divine will. Happy indeed are those who know the will and do it of choice.

Joseph is only about thirty years of age now, and in all the enthusiasm and virility of youthful manhood, we have remarkable illustration of the steadying and strengthening effect of faith upon such a character.

In him we see the man of faith as a *practical* man. His manipulation of the resources of the seven fruitful years is worthy of careful study. Faith does not sit idly down and pray to heaven for plenteous harvest. It ploughs, and sows, and gathers, and garners. Faith permits the exercise of common sense, not only permits it, but demands it; discovers to a man what he ought to be, as well as reveals what God is. Both discoveries are essential to practical manhood, otherwise we caricature faith by our unreasonableness. Faith is the inspiration of reason.

Then, moreover, he is a patient man. Notice carefully his dealings with his brethren. What an opportunity has now come to him to punish them for the bru-

tality of their early dealing with him! The man of faith has no need to take into his own hands any such matters. "I will repay," saith the Lord, and this precludes faith from attempting the task, and God's repayment always does what man cannot accomplish. He turns the curse into a blessing, and uses opposition to further that which men intended to prevent. Viewing life from highest standpoints, Joseph recognizes that out of their brutality God has evolved benedictions, and consequently he can afford in the greatness of the triumph of faith, to be patient and kindly with the men who sold him, actuated by motives of the supremest selfishness and littleness. "Fret not thyself because of evil men." "Trust in the Lord and wait patiently for Him."

And yet again the man of faith is seen as a faithful man. At last he reaches the throne. Only Pharaoh is exempt from submission to his will and authority in all the vast land. And yet in the actualities of the case not even Pharaoh is omitted, for had not this man, living in harmony with God, undertaken the management of affairs, the Pharaoh himself had died of hunger as the meanest serf in his empire. The men of faith must eventually come to the throne of power because they live in relation to the one Throne. Do justly thy duties of to-day, no matter where cast, and the Just One shall say, "Because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things." Realize the obligations of fidelity, and God will vindicate His promises.

Joseph's Brethren and Father.

This lesson contains sidelights in the picture of Joseph's brethren and his father. Conscience has its awakening sooner or later. And yet these men are false enough still to try to act a lie to hide the sin of the past. Yet notice how all unconsciously they blurted out a condemnatory truth when they said, "We are twelve brethren." Sin is never as astute as it should be. It must account for those twelve brethren. Joseph is the

true revelation of the power of faith at this period, and not Jacob. His wail, "All these things are against me," is utterly unworthy of faith. In the man that governs Egypt, exalted from prison to the throne, we see the sublimest manifestations of what a man can do by faith, and what God will do with a faithful man.

Lesson 9. JOSEPH'S NOBLE SPIRIT SHOWN. His Generosity to His Brethren. Scripture Section, Gen. chs. 43-45

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

The Scriptural Value of the Story.

The story of Joseph, like that of Ruth, affords an admirable illustration at once of the freedom in method and of the dominant religious purpose of the Biblical historian. He was not writing parables or allegories, for he sought to convey certain reliable historical impressions; but he felt wholly free to individualize his facts for the sake of attaining a direct religious end. The story form in literature with its definiteness, its appeal to the emotions, its stimulus to the constructive imagination, and its unending charm well suited his purpose, which was to demonstrate the ease with which God could achieve a series of blessings for His people through the loyal service of a truly noble, consecrated man. Joseph's character, particularly his reliability, genuine piety, magnanimity and many-sidedness is the key to the development of the story.

The very advantages of the story form involve some departure from prosaic historical representation. A story is, of necessity, unbalanced, one-sided. It emphasizes some details at the expense of others. What reader

ever thought of Benjamin as other than a lad who needed the guardianship of his elder brothers, the "little one" (44:20) of Jacob's old age, and did not discover, with a feeling akin to impatience, the fact that in 46:21 he is described as the happy father of ten sons, all of whom followed him into Egypt! What reader fails to picture to himself a party of ten brethren, each with his ass and one large sack to be filled with grain! That Benjamin was a mature man and that the brothers headed a caravan, the story nowhere denies, but its emphasis is not on details but on impressions. A less skillful narrator would have been more lavish of his details; this one made his narrative preach!

The verdict of many generations has determined the place of the story of Joseph in literature. For charm and vigor and vividness it is unsurpassed. It develops evenly, but reached a powerful climax. It concludes a remarkable specimen of eloquence in the touching appeal of Judah on behalf of his father and brother. It sets a literary standard which has not unjustly been used as a basis of comparison.

The Practice of Divination.

To not a few readers it seems strange that a man like Joseph, so genuine, noble and devout a personality, should practice divination. The query is a fair one, and yet assumes that the religious conscience of his day did not differ from our own. Divination was the process of determining the will of the Deity by some external manifestation. It assumed that God was ever ready with his answer to a question regarding the future. A judgment obtained by noting the peculiar flight of birds, or the adjustment of the viscera of a slaughtered animal, or the pattern formed in water or oil when a pebble was dropped into a cup or kettle, differed in no vital respect from the interpretation of a dream. Every one believed in omens and dreams. To make use of them was characteristic of a religiously minded man and perfectly natural for Joseph.

Characteristic Oriental Details.

This part of the story incorporates several interesting details which are characteristically Oriental. The personal habits ascribed to Joseph are those of an Egyptian aristocrat, one who had won the proud title of "a father to Pharaoh" (45 : 8). Such an one was reserved in his contact with inferiors or strangers, but could show his approval by sending to them portions of the food which was set before him. No Oriental could grow so great as to forget his home and family. Once convinced that it was wise, his first thought would be to have his people with him, sharing in his good fortune. Presents are a staple of social life among Oriental peoples. Their actual value must be proportioned to the means of the giver, but do not gauge the significance of the gift. Jacob's present to the supposed viceroy was as finely appropriate and acceptable as Joseph's present to his father (45 : 23). Each one did his best according to his resources.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

This lesson gives us a beautiful and suggestive picture of the man of faith in the midst of his greatest triumphs, for the triumph of loving beneficence is always greater than that of the success of an enterprise merely.

The survival of Joseph's fame is not due to the prosperity which crowned his laborious career. Such examples abound, but leave no deep, permanent impression upon the hearts of men. Behind this natural occurrence there is the supernatural—God controlling events, God controlling the man. It was the personal consciousness of this Divine government, which revealed itself in love, that keeps the fame of Joseph imperishable throughout the ages. The realization of "God with us" adds to faith, patience, love.

In examining let us notice:—

1. Joseph's consciousness.
2. Joseph's conduct.

1. *Joseph's Consciousness.* This is manifested clearly in the words spoken to his brethren, "It was not you that sent me hither, but God." Behind their envy and plot he saw the overruling which made the wrath of man accomplish the Divine purpose. As these brethren bowed themselves down before him, the fulfilment of those early dreams which had caused so much heart-burning and trouble had commenced. As he had dreamed and declared, they were bending in his presence and submitting themselves to his authority.

It is at this point that the strength and beauty of Joseph's character breaks forth in suggestiveness of God. A smaller man, or rather a man actuated by other motives such as personal ambition, would have retaliated, or at least have gloated over the fulfilment of his own predictions. The man of faith in God, however, saw the overruling of God, and in the light thereof read the history of the past. His elevation to power was not merely an evidence of Divine favor towards himself, nor was it that principally. It was a method in the determination of God to bless all of them. This being so, their very wickedness in selling him long ago, is set in the light of this same government of God, and is seen as pressed into the service of the larger purpose of love. As the purpose is being fulfilled, Joseph looks back with thankfulness upon his own suffering. "God sent me"; that explains all the circumstances of the past, and accounts for the present opportunity of helpfulness, and the heart of Joseph is filled with love and gladness.

2. *Joseph's Conduct.* That is, of course, the natural outcome of his consciousness. It is the conduct of splendid magnanimity truly, and yet to such a man, with such conceptions of the overruling of God, any other course would be utterly impossible. There are definite evidences of faith which prove the reality of its claim, and magnificently did Joseph demonstrate

them. Even personal pride of the highest quality is gratified by the vindication of a life principle, and can do no other than act with the greatness of a great triumph. It is the man who is uncertain of himself, and insecure in his victory, who wants to complete his conquest by vengeance and retaliation. Accepting all as in the plan of God, and seeing how that plan works out in blessing to all, his conduct of course harmonizes with the thought and intention of God, and he seems to get the deepest satisfaction in overwhelming these men with gifts and tokens of his good will.

Lesson Deductions.

1. Faith in God simplifies life by discovering the primary cause and enabling a man to live in the consciousness thereof. Paul never described himself as a prisoner of Rome, but always as the prisoner of Jesus Christ. What a glory this adds to life! The chain which Rome imposes is transformed into the golden bracelet of a great love token. "God sent me" makes all the pathway appear as the royal highway to a throne.

2. The vindication of faith must come sooner or later. Some day you will help and bless those who curse you to-day. The fierceness of the fires will pass, but the lustre of the tried gold never. Let the course be set in the light of the consummation, the testing in relation to the triumph. Remember Him "who for the joy . . . endured the cross."

3. Man acting by faith with God, acts toward men like God in love. The magnanimity of a great love is the final vindication of faith.

Lesson 10. THE LAST DAYS OF JOSEPH. The Descent of the Israelites into Egypt. Scripture Section, Gen. chs. 46-50

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

The Pharaohs' Ownership of the Land.

It is rather interesting to note that the Egyptian records confirm the fact that under the New Empire landed property in Egypt had passed out of the hands of the old aristocratic families into the almost complete possession of the crown or of the great temples, and that it was rented out by the royal officers at twenty per cent. of the produce. Before the days of the Hyksos the land was in the possession of private owners, usually in the form of great landed estates. The change came as an incident of the rule of the Hyksos. Erman explains it by conjecturing that the new dynasty exterminated the old landed families, who had preferred the foreigners as overlords and confiscated their property. The Biblical explanation is just as reasonable. Joseph is uniformly represented as a shrewd, far-sighted and high-handed executive, and it is in no way incredible that he should seize an opportunity to increase the power of the throne at the expense of its subjects. Democratic ideas had little standing in his day.

The Land of Goshen.

Not less shrewd was Joseph's management of the interests of his family. Transferred by him to a land of security and abundance, it was settled by him in a most congenial locality. The land of Goshen is commonly identified with the northeastern corner of Egypt. It is said to have been unaffected by the annual overflow of the Nile, and therefore to have been unavailable as farming land for the Egyptians, yet fertile enough to afford fair pasturage. It admirably suited these desert dwellers, to whom it was a paradise. While affording to them ample food and shelter, it served as a means of separation from Egyptian people.

Canaan the Real Home.

The narrative affords interesting glimpses of the venerable Jacob. Grateful recognition of God's sustaining care, a calm and reverent thoughtfulness, a farsighted vision of the future, portray a transformed personality, one at peace with God and wholly loyal to Him.

Egypt was never his home. His thoughts dwelt upon Canaan and the sepulchre of his fathers. It is characteristically Oriental that there he should demand to be buried.

Honors to the Dead.

That Jacob and Joseph were embalmed is a matter of course. Whether it was a matter of routine or a mark of distinction is not wholly clear. Probably the Israelites were free to adopt any method of burial.

The procession which was organized to go up to Canaan with the mummy of Jacob was, without doubt, a signal mark of royal esteem and favor. So in all probability would be the conveyances sent for Jacob's convenient transportation to Egypt. That "wagons" or carts were known at that time is proven by the pictures drawn by Egyptian artists representing the Hittite migration. The women, children and household goods are carried in rude two-wheeled carts.

Jacob's Prediction.

The actual poem of Genesis 49 is proven on close inspection to be of considerably later date than the days of Jacob. This fact does not make it wholly imaginative, but only forces the conclusion that it underwent enlargement and revision. The poem in its present form represents not so much his exact words as their historical fulfilment. That in his closing days of life he called his sons about him and predicted the part which each should play in the days before them is not without historical parallel. We must conceive, however, of its being kept, so to speak, up to date.

Conclusion of the Story of Joseph.

Thus the story of Joseph continues and strengthens the impression made by the earlier narratives. Without being able to guarantee its minute accuracy, one can affirm its reasonable agreement with the historical conditions of the age as revealed by archæological research. The details are too general to warrant dogmatic certainty regarding reigns or epochs.

Whether Joseph survived the Hyksos and witnessed the beginnings of the Eighteenth Dynasty, the writer did not indicate. He stops abruptly with the peaceful ending of a brilliant career, the completion of an era of national development, and the hint of a preparation for a new departure.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

In this the last page of the life of Joseph there are still manifest those distinguishing traits which have characterized the whole history. Of course a considerable period of time is covered by the history of these five chapters, but they chronicle for us the last movements in that sequence which has clearly revealed the overruling of God through the life of a surrendered man.

His wisdom, tenderness and faith are manifest in all these final scenes. Consistency marks the life's story and leaves the permanent message, that a man of faith under all conditions can honor God, and is honored by God.

The sanity and common sense, which are supreme evidences of wisdom, are present in the frankness with which he introduces his father and his brethren to Pharaoh. Nothing could be more skilful in order to accomplish his purpose, which was the settlement of his people in a pastoral district, and in separation from Egypt. As he declared, the Egyptians hated shepherds, nomadic people, and so by the candid statement of the truth the precise results he desired were achieved.

A man who is honest simply because honesty is the best policy is often a rogue at heart, and sooner or later his honesty will break down. A man who is honest for honesty's sake will perpetually prove how good the policy of straightness is, and that righteousness is indeed the nearest way to true success.

Joseph's skill is wonderfully revealed in the way in which he served Pharaoh, and secured to him the actual possession of the lands over which he reigned. The lesson is plain that although he will not sin to please those over him, he yet does not neglect the highest interests of his superiors, but serves them in integrity with conspicuous ability. Any man crossing the line of integrity in his attempt to serve, sacrifices his own honor, and is disqualified for higher service. A clear conscience gives stimulus to activity, and develops capacity in well-doing. On such the benediction of God rests.

Joseph's tender dealing with his father is very beautiful, and also with his brethren, whose conscience smote them again about past sin at the death of Jacob. When love forgives, it forgets. It does not recall the past in anger. It does not hold the wrongs of other days as a sword over the heads of offenders. The upright man who trusts God can always afford to be generous. Thus God deals with man. Love blots out the sins of yesterday, and will remember them no more. When the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, we forgive as we are forgiven.

Perhaps, however, the most interesting detail of this closing story in the life of Joseph is its revelation of the fact that residence and power in Egypt had not shaken his confidence in the purpose of God for His chosen people. His very choice of Goshen for them in order that they might be kept in separation from the Egyptians, is proof of this. Nothing dimmed his vision of the divine promise to his fathers. Every movement in his career brought nearer the realization of that purpose. The taking of his boys to Israel for his blessing demonstrates this, and last, and most touching

of all, his request that in the day of coming restoration to their land, his bones should be taken thither.

This is a most fruitful life story.

Its principle. Devotion to God in creed and character and conduct. Absolute harmony. Entire.

Its achievements. Many and remarkable, and that without once lowering the standard of honor.

Its experiences. Varied. From suffering to sovereignty. From prison to throne.

Its passing. A going out in quiet faith. The great purposes of God greeted from afar, and yet not realized. The grave does not limit the vision of faith. Hope sends its gleam of immortality through the gloom to the far off divine event. Content to take part in the process, and die in confidence as to the consummation, "we are to serve our day and generation." That done, we can leave in God's hands the accomplishment of the eternal purposes.

Lesson 11. MOSES' TRAINING FOR PUBLIC SERVICE. His Life in Egypt and in Midian. Scripture Section, Ex. chs. 1-4

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

The Significance of the Abode in Egypt.

Neither the sons of Jacob nor Joseph nor the Pharaoh contemplated at the outset any prolonged residence in Egypt on the part of the Israelites. But they were pleasantly located and for a long time had no reason for departure. The revolution which placed the Egyptian dynasties once more upon the throne of Egypt may not have had any outward effect at the beginning upon the Hebrews, who were, after all, rather few in numbers and obscure. It soon afforded a double reason for their continuance in Egypt. With Thothmes III there was inaugurated that aggressive, military policy which carried the victorious army of Egypt beyond the river Euphrates, making Palestine and Syria a battlefield and highway for many generations. From all such disturbance the Israelites and others who shared with them the hospitality of Egypt were protected. The land of Goshen was a refuge which became in every sense a new home. It may be, as Ebers suggests, that many of the able-bodied sons of Israel fought in the Egyptian armies. Egypt was a place of training and of various sorts of education, limited, no doubt, by the traditional dislike of the Egyptians for foreigners. There was no tendency toward assimilation or absorption.

The Change of Royal Policy.

The Eighteenth Dynasty was composed of rulers who were too active in conquest or too full of religious speculations to be other than tolerant to their reasonably loyal subjects. They had little reason for anxiety. But the Nineteenth Dynasty of kings were confronted by more serious problems, both foreign and domestic. Ramses II, the greatest of them all, found his supremacy in

Syria, and Palestine threatened by the Hittites, with whom he was eventually forced to compromise on fairly equal terms. At the same time he cherished an overweening ambition to make his name immortal by means of all manner of public works in Egypt. Jealous of any of his subjects who might have Palestinian sympathies, and standing in great need of workmen, it is not strange that he oppressed and enslaved the foreigners within his borders. With all due allowances for our limited actual knowledge, Ramses II conforms most clearly to the "Oppressor" of the first chapter of Exodus.

The Education of Moses.

The Biblical explanation of the important, even revolutionary, changes in the environment and outlook of the sons of Israel, which marked the beginnings of their life as a distinct people, was first the distinctive purpose of God, and then the remarkable personality of Moses. He was one of the great men of history, an original, explicable neither by heredity nor environment, yet he had great advantages. At the palace and during his youth he received all that the culture of that day in the most brilliant court of the world could offer. He was, probably, in a position to become familiar with large enterprises. Forced to abandon the court after exhibiting his sympathy for his own race and identifying himself with them, he found in the seclusion of Midian an equally salutary experience. When he began his work of leadership, he seemed to have a clear-cut policy. He knew what to do. For this we may thank the long opportunity given the awakened intellect for deliberation. It was not so much a punishment as an opportunity.

The Call of Moses.

The call of Moses, like that of Abraham, was, historically, no doubt, a much longer and broader affair than the hearkening to a divine command on one particular occasion. He had already made the Israelitish cause his own, he had determined, perhaps, what could be done with his people if once they were freed from Egypt,

but he needed to receive the new revelation of God as the ever-active Providence, the God of Hosts, able to protect and guide His people, and desirous of delivering Israel from oppression. What the Scriptural narrative describes as the declaration of the divine name was really on the part of Moses more than something heard; it was a comprehension of the true character of God in his active relationship with men and a realization that God would support him in achieving Israel's deliverance. With such an ally he could brave the anger even of a Pharaoh.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

Moses was the most remarkable man of Old Testament times, in his personality, in the work he accomplished, and in his abiding influence in the world. The present study covers a period of eighty years, and deals with the subject of his preparation for his great work.

Notice First the Elements in His Training.

1. His birth and early years were such as to have an abiding influence on his after life. His hiding by his parents was due to their faith in the purpose of God for His ancient people, notwithstanding the fact of their wretched condition at the time. Such faith must have its effect on the after-history of the child. How long his mother had charge of him we do not know, but in all probability quite long enough to have instilled into his childish mind thoughts concerning his own people which would bear fruit later on.

2. His long residence at the court of the Pharaoh made him familiar with the ways of kings, and during that time as the son of the Pharaoh's daughter, he was highly educated, becoming "instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," and "mighty in words and works." Thus was contributed those elements of culture and dignity which gave him the ability to rule, and

to deal with kings, which characterized his later years.

3. The next period was one of strange contrast; the life of a shepherd among the lonely splendors of the land of Midian; forty years of pastoral and meditative life, for which his mind had been trained by the discipline of Egyptian education. Thus were contributed those elements of quiet and restful strength, and massive meekness which were necessary for all that was to follow.

4. Then lastly followed the awful splendor of his actual call and commission by Jehovah. The child of the court found himself in the presence of a Majesty which compelled him to take off his shoes, and become a worshiper, a Majesty greater than that of earthly kings while yet independent of its small trappings. The child of the wilderness found himself in the presence of a commonplace bush, the like of which he had seen on every hand for long years, but which now was the throne of a Fire which overawed his spirit. From such circumstances his call to actual service came. He was to become the representative to the court he had left so long ago, of that lone Majesty manifested in the desert.

Notice Next the Man in His Development.

1. The choice of manhood's years was one of faith. No other motive is sufficient to account for it. It was based upon a deep conviction of the purpose of God for His people. The occasion revealed much in himself which proved his unfitness for leadership, and that explains his flight. The flight, however, demonstrates the choice of faith.

2. After forty years his attitude when commissioned is remarkable. His reluctance to obey, even to the point of weakness, is evidence of how well he had learned the lessons of his own insufficiency. And yet his ultimate obedience is even more remarkable as evidence of faith in God. When the timid shrinking from fear of his own weakness was overcome, he went forward with a splendid heroism to a work that must have filled the heart of any man with fear, save as he was resting in

God. Criticise his cowardice, let who will; they should also commend his courage.

When God raises up a providential man, He generally finds him where no one else would look for him, but events will show that he was indeed chosen in infinite wisdom, and after all needed preparation. God uses or dispenses with the methods of men as may be wisest, but He never sends forth any men on His service save those who are perfectly prepared at every point for the work to which they are appointed.

The chief preparation after all is in the spirit of a man. Neither the wisdom of Egypt, nor the habits of her court, nor yet the shepherd work in the wilderness perfectly prepared Moses. There had yet to be the greatest preparation of all, that of the bringing of his will into trustful submission to the purpose of God. This was accomplished at the burning bush, indirect and personal revelation.

Lesson 12. MOSES BEFORE PHARAOH. His Work for Israel Begun. Scripture Section, Ex. 5; 1—12: 36

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

The Significance of the Oppression to Israel.

The period of oppression was not an unmixed evil to the tribes of Israel. It drew the harassed people together; it emphasized their condition as aliens and prevented them from any tendency to amalgamate with the Egyptians. It demonstrated the value of their ancient freedom and not only made them willing to purchase this at any price, but forever determined them to maintain it when achieved. It quickened their consciousness of the God of their fathers and of His power, so that Moses could base upon it a weighty appeal. Even their hardships were a salutary introduction to those of the desert, which were to follow.

The Pharaoh of the Exodus.

Just when the departure of the Israelites occurred no one can say with assurance. During the reign of Ramses the great, Palestine was either the scene of active warfare or in the undisputed possession of Egypt, Syria being similarly controlled by the Hittites. This state of things continued, according to the Egyptian records, until the early part of the reign of Ramses III, when a great change took place. In the reign of his predecessor, Menephtah, a "barbarian" invasion, coming from Asia Minor along the coast swept over Syria and Palestine almost up to the confines of Egypt. The invaders overwhelmed the Hittite empire and wrecked it, similarly overran Palestine and Phœnicia, and were only driven back from the borders of Egypt by heroic, costly and exhausting efforts. In the days of Ramses III they came again only to be once more defeated, but at a heavy cost, which crippled Egypt for centuries, and caused her to loose her hold upon Palestine. Thus was

created the first possibility, historically speaking, of an armed entrance into Palestine and of an independent conquest. In view of these facts it seems likely that the Pharaoh of the Exodus was either Menephtah or Ramses III. Each sovereign was sorely harassed and considerably weakened by these attacks.

The Demands of Moses.

From the standpoint of the religious thinking of that day the reasons which Moses first gave to the Pharaoh for the departure of his people are interesting. The demand was formulated in the name of Jehovah, their God, to whom they must offer sacrifice three days' journey away in the wilderness. It was the proper demand of a national or tribal God unto His worshipers, and implied that their tribal obligations and rights were unimpaired. Jehovah had revealed Himself anew to His people and demanded recognition under the proper conditions. Pharaoh's reply was a defiance of Jehovah, an insult to Moses, His representative, and a refusal to admit the independent status of the Israelites as an organized body of people. The subsequent contest between the Pharaoh and Moses was in no sense personal to the latter; it was the struggle of the Pharaoh against Jehovah, so understood by all parties. The Biblical historian in this respect correctly interpreted current beliefs.

The Departing Gifts.

Despite the awful stroke which broke down the iron will of the unhappy despot and brought mourning into every household of Egypt, the Biblical accounts represent the departure of the Hebrews as one accompanied by expressions of goodwill on the part of the people of Egypt. The expression in 12:36, "spoiled the Egyptians," is unfortunate. It has often been pointed out that the gifts which the Israelites received were quite customary in the case of departure from any place. The Egyptians were more than liberal, for they ardently wished for the speedy departure of the Hebrews. The

gifts were merely a customary method of wishing good luck.

The Exodus Viewed Historically.

Few events are better attested than the exodus. Hebrew traditions and folk-tales and Hebrew institutions alike gave it commemoration. The Passover was made into its special memorial feast. It thus was kept fresh in the minds of the people that they were delivered from bondage in Egypt.

That no direct evidence exists for the exodus in Egyptian records need not disturb the student, since no ancient people chronicled its disasters or failures, save as they prepared the way for ultimate victory. The general details find support in the fact that the separation of the Israelites from the grip of the Egyptian was in itself a remarkable feat, calling for the wise and skillful leadership of a great personality, such as Moses must have been.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

In this wonderful history we are brought face to face with God, Pharaoh, and Moses.

Jehovah is seen moving in all the might and majesty of His power toward the accomplishment of a set purpose, and two men stand out in bold relief, the one submitted to, and co-operating with, the movement, and the other rebellious against, and crushed thereby.

God in His Majesty and Might.

The moment has come for the delivery of His people.

All the purposes of their exile and trouble are fulfilled, and now He will bring them out.

One stands in the presence of His method overawed and yet filled with wonder and worship. He is absolutely irresistible, and yet moves in such a way that even His enemy shall have every chance either to repent and be delivered, or to demonstrate in human history the ab-

solute justice of his own destruction. Jehovah foreknew the issue and told it to Moses, but His foreknowledge is not causation, and He gives this man every opportunity by warnings, and gradations of punishment, to turn from his evil. By so doing, Pharaoh is made to reveal the utter evil of his own nature, and that the fate determined is in accord with strictest justice.

Pharaoh the Man Fighting God.

This man is an awful illustration of the terrific majesty of the human will, even when in rebellion. Proud in heart, he becomes insolent in his challenge of God. When that challenge is answered by unmistakable manifestations of power, he becomes maliciously angry and dishonest. The blinding passion of pride led to vain imaginings, "Who is Jehovah that I should hearken unto His voice. . . . I will not let Israel go." In this spirit the finite enters into conflict with the Infinite, and the contest leaves on record the unutterable folly of the pride which impels a man to fling himself against the Most High, only to be broken of his own will upon the shield of God.

Moses the Man Fighting With God.

Moses is revealed in two aspects, that of his relation to God, and that of his attitude toward Pharaoh. As to the former, he is seen as reverently familiar, transparently honest, and implicitly obedient. His access to, and communion with, God are easy and direct. This is ever the case where a man is carrying out a definite commission for God. His honesty is seen in that when he is perplexed and disappointed by the complaining of his own people, he goes immediately to God, and with the simplicity and frankness of a child tells Him all that is in his heart (5 : 22, 23). To such honesty God can make known His ways. Then follows obedience in face of apparent failure after failure, quiet, dignified, and unfaltering.

This relation to God created his attitude toward

Pharaoh, which is dignified, as he speaks ever and only in the name of Jehovah; patient, as he responds to every appeal of Pharaoh to intercede for him, when panic-stricken for a moment he asks such help; persistent, as he returns again and again, though insolently driven from the royal presence; and uncompromising, as he refuses every suggestion of Pharaoh which minimizes the claim he is sent to urge.

Is there any page in Bible history which more graphically sets forth the all-conquering might of God, and yet His unwearying patience? And is there any other story that reveals in more terrible and splendid setting the relation of the will of man to God? The divine will must triumph, and the result to man of this tremendous fact depends altogether upon the relation his will bears to that of God. Surrendered to God a man is unconquerable, and moves through all processes of evident victory, or seeming defeat toward the final song of an assured triumph.

Rebellious against God, man is already defeated, and moves toward final and irretrievable disaster, notwithstanding wealth, position, armies, and all other advantages which for the moment appear too strong even for God, but which at last will be seen to be the common drift with which the winds and waves make sport.

Reverence may have its humiliation, and obedience may experience disappointments, but conquest is assured. Mercy postpones judgment, but does not defeat justice.

God never compromises the faith that obeys His commands. "Speak all that I command thee," is the divine commission; and though our expectations are not immediately realized, God's purpose never fails.

Moses in his fidelity to Jehovah was "as God to Pharaoh" (7:1), hence unconquerable.

Lesson 13. REVIEW OF LESSONS 1-12

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

From Abraham to Moses.

The fundamental idea expressed in Isaiah 51:1, 2, still holds good for Christian Israel. It is salutary to consider the beginnings of a truly spiritual relationship to God, and to realize how humble they were, how altogether different from that with which we are familiar to-day, or even from what had been achieved up to the days of the great prophet. We cannot put ourselves exactly in the place of a devout Israelite and interpret Genesis as he did, for he raised no questions of any kind; but we can appreciate as fully as he the religious suggestiveness and power of the narratives and can interpret them from more points of view. Their bearing on the history of religion he could not have understood at all; to us it is eminently instructive.

Viewed as Literature.

From Genesis 12 to Exodus 12 we have a fine example of historical literature of purpose. It shows great skill in the sketching of progress by the use of a few appropriate incidents, in description by contrasts, in character portrayal and particularly in epic enlargement, which contributes toward realism. The personalities live before us, we readily enter into their experiences, we almost endow them with the knowledge and the delicate spiritual sensitiveness of our own day. The writers were master hands at description.

The naturalness, charm, simplicity and power of these narratives can hardly be overstated. Their literary merit is readily observed by the careful reader of selected passages such as the wooing of Rebekah (Gen. ch. 24), the purchase of Machpelah (23), the plea of Judah (44), the wooing of Rachel (29), the struggle of Jacob with God (32), the promotion of Joseph

(39-41). Such writing grips the memory and stirs the constructive imagination remarkably.

Viewed as History.

It is clear that the historians of this period were less intent upon history than on preaching. It may be doubted whether they had at their disposal more than meagre traditions. However this may be, the real origin of Israel was probably much more complex than a reading of the narratives would lead us to suppose. The narratives center attention upon one line of development. It describes the history of a family. But races do not originate in so simple a fashion. Moreover, the Hebrews in Palestine were constantly absorbing strange elements. Doubtless they were more or less of a mixed race from the beginning. These are questions really for the student of ethnology, and can only be finally answered by him. In the interests of simplicity, clearness, impressiveness and instruction the prophetic writers ignored all side issues and simply aimed to show that Abraham was the starting-point of the new religious development which produced historical Israel.

Viewed as the History of Religion.

This is a viewpoint essentially modern, but very instructive. The lack of perspective in making a survey of Israel's history prevents the grasp of many a helpful fact. Particularly it imposes unnecessary burdens upon the reverent reader who judges the era as he would judge his own age.

Religion in the days of the patriarchs was a great reality. Abraham was as religious as Paul; he had, according to the narrative, as vivid a sense of the Divine presence and power. But Abraham was no theologian; he could not formulate his feeling in ways which make for edification; he began at the bottom of the spiritual ladder. In his days religion was at a rudimentary stage. God was supposed to reveal Himself most readily at particular places, reverence was paid to trees, or pillars, or stones. There was great room for growth.

Viewed as Religious Instruction.

Here we reach the heart of the narratives. Underlying the anthropomorphisms of such a narrative as Genesis 18 is the noble permanent thought of the fellowship of God with men. But the real truth which the narratives drive home is the broader declaration that God is a providence, the fashioner of history, the orderer of human life. This is their real, distinctive theme.

These narratives embody great studies in religious experience, characterized by insight and elevation. Abraham, Sarah, Jacob, Rebekah, Esau, Laban, Joseph, Judah, Moses, and Aaron are true types, portrayed with a more than personal interest. They represent stages of religious development of which men are conscious to-day.

To us these narratives convey the same helpfully stimulating sense of Divine power and goodness and nearness, of human need and responsibility, and of the co-operative relationship of God and man that inspired the devout son of Israel as he perused them two thousand years and more ago. Some details have a meaning for us which he did not realize; the distinctive ideas we share with him.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

A review of these lessons resolves itself into a contemplation of the dealings of God with men, as to purpose, methods, and agents.

The Purpose.

In order to a right understanding of the history of the Hebrew people it cannot too often be insisted on that the purpose of God in calling and creating the nation was that of blessing all other nations. The election of the Hebrew people is sometimes thought of as though it meant the exclusion of all others from the favor of God. So far from this being the case, the only reason for their being chosen was that through them, such

revelations of the breadth and beauty and beneficence of the kingdom of God should be manifest, that others might see and believe. Within that purpose there was included the plan of redemption for the race, and the Chosen People were the channel through which such redemption should be wrought out. The memory of these facts will help in the understanding of all the history. A purpose so great explains much of the slowness and mystery of the process.

The Methods.

A nation is to be created which shall be under the direct government of God in order that His will may be accomplished. Thus, a man is called out from his people distinctly and directly, and henceforth his only law of life is to be that of faith in God and submission to His will. Then from Him the nation is to come as a family, all seeking to know the will of God in regard to all the details of their lives. It is the realization among men of a theocracy in visible form. Through the pages of the history studied in these lessons, we have seen the nation grow from the man, pass through a period of suffering, and come through deliverance to the eve of a great national realization. All the principles of the Messianic mission are seen at work, as we keep our mind on the nation rather than the individuals. Life lived under Divine control; life learning obedience through suffering; and life coming towards an exodus in co-operation with God.

The Agents.

This history gathers round certain men, who appear at critical occasions and lead to further development. These are men of different temperament. Abraham is a seer, who through the distances beholds the city of God. Isaac is a man of silence, whose contribution to the progress is that of submission. Jacob is subtle, and reveals the triumph of the Divine over the human for ultimate victory. Joseph is the man of simple aim and

devotion, and is the medium of the purposes of God without strife. Moses is the cultured and self-controlled statesman, the instrument perfectly fitted to be the channel for establishing the Divine economy.

Yet while differing so widely, these men are all actuated by one principle, that of faith in God, and the ultimate accomplishment of His purpose. In some this principle is manifest more clearly, and works more naturally than in others, but in all it is ever present, and sooner or later proves itself to be the victorious element in their life and work.

Each separate temperament, governed by this dominant principle, contributes its own quota toward the general movement, and so each appears in his own day as God's providential man exactly meeting the immediate necessity.

These lessons are more than mere history. They give us, moreover, more than the history of God's revelation of Himself to men. They reveal the perpetual principles of His government. He is still the God of nations, and raises up and casts down in the working out of His purposes of blessing. The creation and blessing of the American people is as distinctly the result of the Divine control as that of the Hebrew people. These choices, however, are not capricious. They depend upon the response of a people to His will as revealed. Moreover all human history reveals the appearance at critical moments of providential men, fitted, and equipped for, and used in the carrying out of the purposes of God. All such men are to be measured like the men of the Bible, not by their individual failures, but by their contribution under God to the great whole. The one principal essential, and found in all, is that of faith in God.

HISTORICAL AND EXPOSITORY NOTES.

Lesson 14. MOSES THE LIBERATOR. Israel's Departure from Egypt. Scripture Section, Ex. 12: 37—15: 21

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

The Real Deliverer.

The keynote of the story of the exodus is the deliverance of the children of Israel by Jehovah. To the nation in after generations it was no happy combination of circumstances nor a carefully formulated scheme originated and executed by Moses that set the Israelites free to wander where they would, but the deliberate exhibition of divine forethought and energy. It is natural for us in an age which insists upon knowing the immediate causes of every achievement to turn our attention to the human actors and to the actual sequence of events. The Hebrew mind was satisfied with the assurance that the directive personality was God. Upon this glorious theme their writers poured out their souls in ecstasy. The deliverance was a divine affair, the triumph of Jehovah over the power of Egypt's gods. Any such contest seems absurd to us of today, when we give it real consideration, for there were no Egyptian gods with any such power. But those who lived in the age of Moses believed fully in the existence and local importance of Egypt's gods. It seemed to them that Jehovah had won a great victory over these gods; and both those who participated in the deliverance and those who came after vied in expressions of grateful praise.

The Song of Moses.

This is well illustrated by the dramatic poem of the fifteenth chapter of Exodus. It makes glad acknowledgment of Jehovah's might, put forth to deliver and

protect His people, so significant an exhibition of His purposes and power that those who oppose their execution may well tremble, whether individuals or peoples. "Who is like unto thee, O Jehovah, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders."

The Passover.

The formal expression by the Israelitish nation in after generations of this gratitude was at the feast of the Passover. Despite our lack of evidence regarding the regular celebration of this feast until a date centuries removed from the exodus, it is quite probable that the feast had a commemorative value from the outset of the national life. Regarding its origin there is much difference of opinion. Most students think that the Passover memorial feast was the transformation and appropriation of an earlier people's feast, which was itself of the greatest popularity and significance. A corresponding appropriation and reinterpretation for religious ends of an earlier custom is found in circumcision, which did not originate with the Israelites but was given a special significance among them.

The Route of the Exodus.

Dr. Henry Clay Trumbull's study of the Biblical data relating to this journey toward the desert in the appendix to "Kadesh-barnea" has never been surpassed in clearness and acute suggestion. The historical facts are obscured by the blending in chapters 13 to 15 of several accounts of the deliverance, each, like the first three Gospel accounts of the life of Jesus, from a distinct point of view. They sum up into a speedy assembling of the Israelites at a rendezvous; their advance to the border of Egypt; a delay, due either to a change of plan (13:17) or to the difficulty of finding a practical passageway unguarded by the line of fortresses which the Egyptian sovereigns in those days of menace from the East maintained; the determination of Pharaoh to

follow and reclaim them, and the overtaking of the Israelites by the Egyptian forces at the very edge of the water barrier.

The Crossing of the Sea.

The oldest testimony to the passage of the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage into the freedom of the desert is given by the poem in Exodus 15. This testifies to the marvelous escape of the people led by Moses in a way which pointed directly to God's immediate aid, and to a corresponding disaster which befell the troops of Egypt. The prose narratives blended in chapter 14 indicate that an opportunity to cross the water barrier came unexpectedly and that the Israelites were able to take advantage of it, while the army perished. It is quite impossible for any one at the present day to determine exactly what happened. The actual deliverance, however, is the most important fact. The Israelites did get free, because Jehovah gave them timely help. This they never forgot. It became a great upbuilding, soul-stirring theme, which may be traced in the religious thinking of their representative men. Like the missionary outlook and impulse of the present age, the demonstration of divine goodness and greatness through this great deliverance sustained and stimulated the inner religious life of Israel.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

This study introduces us to a new period in the history of the Hebrew people. The bondage of their slavery is broken, and they are no longer a subservient people. The great theocratic ideal is now being realized, and in its first stages manifested to other nations. A nation of six hundred thousand men besides women and children is seen here under the direct government of God, the King of kings. It is a wonderful spectacle, and these first movements are radiant in their revelation of the splendor of such a government. The people themselves are revealed in all their weakness and imperfection. God is manifested in His majesty and wisdom. Moses is

seen in all the strength resulting from his long preparation. Supreme interest attaches to the vision of God. Let us therefore first consider that vision, glancing in conclusion at Moses and the people.

The Great King Jehovah.

Immediately the nation has left Egypt itself, God asserts His sovereignty over them and arranges that the sense of it shall be kept alive by the institution of a feast to be annually observed in commemoration of the fact that He delivered them, and by claiming as specially devoted to Himself the first-born of man and beast. These are sacramental symbols of the relation of the nation to Himself, and it is of special interest to note that the feast is arranged as an object lesson for the children of coming generations, in order that by explaining its meaning the fathers may pass on the great and all-important truth. The King is seen as directing the movements of the nation with great wisdom and irresistible power.

The circuitous route of their marching has a meaning. They are not taken the near way through the Philistines' country, because they are unprepared for war, and fear might take possession of them. They are led into a place of apparent danger in order that their hardened and brutal foe may be brought to destruction. The picture of the two hosts and the two kings is full of color and of fire. It presents on the one hand the splendidly equipped forces of Pharaoh with all the signs and sounds of worldly strength, and on the other the poor crowd of escaped slaves led and guarded by the mystic majesty of the pillar of cloud and fire.

The vengeance of Jehovah in the destruction of the Egyptians, is seen moving with irresistible force, infinite precision and poetic justice. No wonder that poetry and song celebrated the glorious triumph, for the whole movement manifests the glory of God, and the absolute safety and unconquerable strength of a God-governed people.

The Nation.

Apart from the King how weak and contemptible these people are, crying out in panic-stricken fear and rebellious murmuring in the first place of peril, and joining in the song of glad triumph within so short a space! Yet it is well to remember how slavery debases any people. The supreme value of the whole history of the Hebrews is not that of the revelation of the greatness of a people, but that of the greatness of God as a King; and their very failure does but serve as a background to throw into brighter relief the divine glory.

Moses.

The strength of Moses is seen in his attitude toward the people and toward God. Toward them he is calm, dignified and confident. In the presence of God he is anxious, submissive and obedient. His fear was not manifest to the crowd. It was expressed in his cry to his God. The triumph of such relationship to God and man on the part of this appointed leader is expressed in the great anthem of praise which followed the deliverance through the sea. It is unmatched as a stately expression of dignified triumph and vindicated trust.

Learn

How essential it is to be comprehensive in our outlook —God, the nation, its leaders. Omit God, and we lose sight of the divine purpose in human life. Too often this is our mistake. The people inspire no hope, and the leaders are powerless against national weakness and temper. Look at finite weakness through infinite power, and there will be movement and rythm in the march, order in place of chaos, an invincible army instead of a rabble.

Do not reverse the method of Moses in dealing with discouragements. Moses never faltered before the people, no word of doubt escaped his lips. Whatever he felt in that respect went straight into the ears of God. Let faith speak to men.

Lesson 15. MOSES THE LEADER. His Care for the People on the March to Sinai. Scripture Section, Ez. 15: 22—18: 27

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

His Genius for Leadership.

Moses appears to have been a born leader of men. No student of the narrative of the exodus can doubt his possession of the qualities which give a man ascendency and influence over men in the mass. He was of course a trained man of large resourcefulness, accustomed to the exercise of authority. No less marked was his capacity for anticipating and relieving the hindrances to such a movement as that of the Hebrews. But he was more than a born organizer and director. His unfailing courage, born of an unswerving confidence in Jehovah's might and purpose had an inspirational value for his people, nerving them too for heroic efforts at critical moments. These characteristics have to be inferred, but are warranted by the facts.

His Manifold Responsibility.

The exact conditions of his task will always be unknown, since the early historical records do not go into sufficient detail. As will be seen, we cannot even be sure regarding the route selected. Yet we are certain that he went away from the border of Egypt toward the sacred mountain in charge of a large and probably an unorganized body of people. Under the most favorable circumstances he was presented with three serious problems: the transportation of the aged and feeble, the providing for the daily needs of all, and the thorough organization of the people for protection and for government. At a stroke his people had become free, but that very moment made him the responsible leader of an independent people, exposed to hostilities wherever they should go. The story of the repulse of Amalek and that of the careful organization of the people are but indications of his immediate interest in these problems.

The Sacred Mountain: Sinai-Horeb.

The natural objective of the people, led by Moses, was the sacred mountain, where Moses himself had come to know Jehovah. In Hebrew traditions the name of this mountain is sometimes given as Sinai, sometimes as Horeb. The former name, if derived, as many think, from the Babylonian moon-god, Sin, indicates its very early sanctity. The Oriental mind of that day found it vastly easier to receive religious impressions at a place already regarded as hallowed by divine manifestation. This sacred mountain was the most fitting place for the sending of the covenant which Moses intended to establish between Jehovah and Israel.

The true location of this mountain is even to-day a matter of active discussion. Sayce would place it in the land of Midian, which he locates to the north and east of the eastern arm of the Red Sea. Others would locate it in Edom, largely on the evidence of such passages as Jud. 5:4, 5, or Deut. 33:2 or 32:10. Still others prefer the traditional site in the southern part of the Sinaitic peninsula, and this location is as probable as any.

The Roads to Sinai.

Whether the Israelites went southward or eastward after getting well away from Egypt, they were not forced to traverse a trackless desert. On the contrary, there were well-marked highways over which caravans and troops were often passing. Several of these are alluded to in the early histories (Gen. 16:7; Ex. 13:17, 18). The existence of the highways make it fairly probable that there were other conveniences.

The Sinai Region.

Every narrative of the Exodus suggests the disparity between the needs of the people and their resources, and emphasizes their dependence upon Jehovah, their God. To the Hebrews of the days of Solomon, as to us, the Sinai region seemed destitute of resources. Winckler, however, thinks it not unreasonable to suppose that the

Minæan Kingdom over Arabian peoples, annihilated about the seventh or eighth century, B. C., was in the time of Moses in its most vigorous beginnings, in which case both the peninsula of Sinai and the land of Midian or Seir would be the centre of a vigorous though rude civilization, and the problem of caring for Israel would be much more simple.

The manna and the quails are a part of the historical tradition, but in view of the evidence of a considerable population in the Sinaitic region at that time, and the presence with the Israelites of their flocks and herds, we may well infer that the manna and the quails were not the only means of subsistence available for the people on their journey.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

Our present lesson shows us Israel emancipated but unorganized. In many respects the most difficult task is still before Moses. Here we see the beginnings of that work, and attention is directed to the people in the difficulties of the position; to Moses, discharging the functions of leadership; and to Jehovah, the all-sufficient One.

1. The frequent expressions of dissatisfaction by the people are not surprising when their long continuance in slavery is remembered. A vast multitude, numbering certainly over a million, suddenly set at liberty, after a life spent in bondage, would, in the natural order of things, create a problem fraught with difficulty for any one undertaking the work of organizing them into a nation.

Of course it is true that these people never lost the sense of their religion, and consequently were saved from the more terrible forms of depravity, such as invariably follow in the wake of slavery. Still, liberty without the realization of personal responsibility created a grave peril. They followed Moses out of Egypt, and apparently anticipated a life of immediate ease. They

utterly failed to appreciate their own unfitness, and the necessity which existed for preparing them for national life and international relationships. Hence their murmuring in every new crisis of difficulty, and their disobedience in some of the simplest matters, such, for instance, as the attempt to keep manna from day to day, and the going out of many of them to gather it on the Sabbath.

2. Under these trying circumstances the greatness of Moses is revealed. This greatness is manifested in his loyalty to the underlying principle of faith in God. The clamoring multitude ever drove him to communion with God. There was no independent action on his part. Every difficulty was laid before God, and he worked in harmony with the divine counsel. Fearlessly and with consummate ability he grasped the situation, and bent to his task, but always in the spirit of conscious and active dependence upon Jehovah.

He moreover manifested his weakness of spirit in his willingness to depend upon man in so far as such dependence did not interfere with his relation to God. His acceptance of Jethro's suggestion is proof not of weakness but of strength. The man who facing some great task refuses the counsel of others because it may seem to rob him of the appearance of personal ability, lacks real greatness. In this twofold respect we have a revelation of the true elements of strength in all leadership.

The man who would confront the problems and perplexities of a people in the spirit of a true leader must live in right relationship with the Throne of the Eternal.

He must, moreover, be amenable to wise counsel from whencesoever it may come. The scheme of Jethro which Moses accepted, providing for devolution of responsibility, was one of undoubted wisdom. Through it Moses lost nothing of authority, but rather was enabled to make that authority felt through all the nation.

3. High over all, the radiant glory of God is manifested. In great tenderness and patience He bears with

all the folly of the people. With inexorable firmness He insists upon obedience, through His servants sternly rebuking the direct acts of disobedience.

And yet, perhaps, the revelation of God which in this lesson is supreme, is that of His resourcefulness. Whether the need be for food, or water, or victory over foes, in unexpected and unusual ways, and yet with unhesitating certainty He supplies their needs. Thus in communion Moses is learning the ways of God, and through his mediatorship of authority the people are observing His mighty acts.

Lessons.

1. What hope is inspired by this study! The most unpromising material wisely led and God-blessed, shapes into a force to bless all nations.
2. Let authority discover its real mission, and to God it will turn for counsel. It will not waste opportunities by meeting unreasonable murmurings in the spirit of anger, but will make such experiences incentives to seeking divine guidance.
3. The man God-chosen for leadership will be quick to recognize in others the spirit of sympathy with the divine purposes.
4. Let faith contemplate the resourcefulness of God and its service will be unfaltering.

Lesson 16. MOSES THE LAWGIVER. The Covenant with God Accepted. Scripture Section, Ex. chs. 19-24

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

The Scene of the Covenant.

At Sinai, the holy mountain, where Jehovah had already revealed Himself to their great leader, Moses, the Israelites entered willingly into a solemn and irrevocable relationship with Jehovah. He had demonstrated the adequacy of His power, had manifested His tender love and providential care; through Moses He now invited their particular loyalty as a people on the eve of a new life. Sinai they regarded as His abode or at least as a locality where He was wont to manifest Himself. In the Israelites, accustomed to the flatness of the Nile valley and the delta, there must have been awakened a feeling akin to awe by the rugged, precipitous outlines of the sacred mountain. No more fitting spot could have been selected for the solemn act of adoption.

The Meaning of It.

The Israel which Moses was leading was to all intents and purposes a new people. Since its numbers had raised it above the status of a clan, it had scarcely had the opportunity of realizing its individuality and outlining a future. So vague is our actual knowledge of the practical religious ideas of a people of their day or of their own conceptions that we are not justified in making unqualified assertions. It seems very probable, however, that the average Israelite conceived of himself as entering into a solemn pledge to do loyal service to Jehovah, and to live in accordance with the rules this relation should involve. It was more than the mere renewing of an earlier covenant, for the Jehovah of Sinai had shown Himself under aspects of which their fathers had had no glimpse. He was their protector and leader; they were ready to follow. The closeness of the relationship and the sacredness of the vow were symbolized by the

division of blood (Ex. 24:6, 8). Jehovah and Israel entered into blood-brotherhood.

Moses' Work of Organization.

Three theories of the work achieved by Moses at Sinai have found acceptance. A rather natural inference from the Biblical account is that Moses had no part to play save that of an intermediary. He received and transmitted the explicit and comprehensive instructions of God. This view lays a right emphasis upon the divine share in the transaction, but fails to take into account the data made known by students of comparative religion and archæology, who have shown that the Hebrews were not an isolated and peculiar race. Not a few scholars, relying upon these data, take the view that little more was done at Sinai than to ratify in a perfectly familiar way the new relationship which was to exist between Jehovah and Israel, and that no institutions were there set up which were in any sense new. A third view seems broader and more probable, viz.: that Moses was a real factor in this great initiation of Israel into being a people, that as a founder he shaped their institutions, utilizing the old but creating under Divine inspiration the new as well. Much of this work would be adaptation.

It was a salutary and successful work. The people received at Sinai a bent which they never lost. It was essentially the birthplace of the future nation.

The Covenant Law.

The record declares that during the early stay at Sinai three sorts of law were promulgated: an ethical code and one which included both civil and ritual obligations, each of a relatively simple character. It would be difficult to conceive of a leader of the type of Moses who would be satisfied with less or achieve much more. His people were still nomads in organization and temper and possessions. They were to live in the desert, where an elaborate system of legislation is quite needless. They needed only the germs of the elaborate organization of

the later centuries. The sacred tent, the ark, the attendants, the ritual, the glad and generous offerings of the sacred furnishings all show the natural forms of the religious life which then began for the people. The record which we read in the chapters that follow and in Leviticus and Numbers really describes the final development reached by this simple system after many centuries of reverent usage.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

Gradually we have seen Israel the nation proceeding from the man Abraham. So far all the Divine guidance has been in fulfilment of terms of the covenant made with the father of the people. The time had come when the covenant must become national. The nation as a nation has had its birth, and the inter-relationship between it and God must be expressed in a covenant, the terms of which shall include the whole of the people. Its principles will be identical with that made with Abraham. This covenant is to be the foundation of national life. All that comes after will be but the unfolding and explanation and application of its underlying principles.

Here we see some of the most thrilling and awe-inspiring scenes in the history of Moses. Notice four movements:

1. The solemn preparation.
2. The simple statement of the covenant and its acceptance.
3. The application of the covenant to present necessities.
4. The solemn ceremonies chronicled at the close.

1. The Solemn Preparation (Ex. 19:1-3).

Acquaintance with the natural features of the wilderness of Sinai will show how awe-inspiring was the place chosen for this solemn ceremony. Rugged and splendid in its desolation, inspiring solemnity of heart and mind,

affording a fitting amphitheater for enactments so profound and magnificent. Into the mountain around whose base the people clustered, Moses went and there heard the voice of God as He declared the terms of the covenant.

2. The Covenant and its Acceptance (Ex. 19:4-6).

The covenant as here declared manifests the infinite grace of God. He relates the deliverances wrought, and indicates their meaning. He has brought them to Himself. He then declares their personal responsibility, that they should obey His voice and keep His covenant, and finally, announces His purpose for them, they are to be the people of His possession, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation.

This declaration is the foundation of everything which is to follow, and is radiant with the light of infinite love. The sterner messages must be read in this light. Moses makes known the terms to the people. They immediately accept, by which they seem to reveal ignorance of their own frailty, and yet no other attitude could meet the requirement of the occasion.

3. The Application of the Covenant to Present Necessities (Ex. 19:7—23:1).

In this section we notice the marked contrast of all that now happens, to the tone of the covenant as at first enunciated. The God of tender grace now announces Himself as approaching in thick cloud. The people are commanded to maintain a worshipful and awe-impulsed distance. Thunders and lightnings and the voice of a trumpet are the accompaniments.

We have no reason to believe that this indicates a change of purpose, or is in the nature of punishment. The covenant declared in simplicity and tenderness is not altered, but the people are not prepared to enter into immediate possession of all therein intended. They must learn their own unfitness, and by processes be brought into full realization. The covenant of grace

therefore must express itself for the time being in law.

Then follows that section which may be spoken of as the book of the covenant, which includes chapters 20-23. This should be divided into two parts, first, the laws which indicate the line of obedience promised (20:1—23:19), and secondly, gracious promises made on conditions of obedience (23:20-33). These should again be divided into, first, fundamental and all-inclusive commandments, ten in number, the first four of which define the relationship between the people and God, and the last six human inter-relationships (20), and second, the application of the principles of the laws to local circumstances (21:1—23:19). Then follow the promises.

4. Closing Ceremonies (ch. 24).

The book of the covenant is read in the audience of the people and they again consent to its terms. After this Moses and the elders hold solemn communion with God, and finally Moses moves into yet nearer place of fellowship that he may receive detailed instruction concerning the method of worship.

The supreme revelation of this section is that of God. His purpose is always true to the essential fact of his nature, that of love and grace. This purpose, however, in order to its own fulfilment must move along the line created by the necessity of the people. The requirements of love are stern and searching, or to state the truth from the other side, all the awful majesty and terror of law is but the necessary expression to a sinning people of the infinite love.

Lesson 17. MOSES THE MEDIATOR. The Covenant Broken and Restored. Scripture Section, Ex. chs. 32-34

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

The Sudden Crisis.

A dramatic element is given to the story of the sojourn of Israel at Sinai by the account of the unexpected relapse of the people during the absence of Moses into familiar but unsanctioned ways of worship. It does not appear to have been a deliberate defiance of Him but a thoughtless indulgence of popular impulse. Exodus 32:4, 5 shows that it was not a denial of Jehovah that was intended by the people but the construction of a visible symbol. Moses and all who followed him earnestly regarded the matter as very serious, an outbreak which must be sternly repressed and symbolically atoned for. We are hardly able to-day to exactly describe the sin, as felt by the very actors on that memorable day when Moses suddenly reappeared. It was evidently a belittling of the Divine majesty or possibly a disparaging of the injunction of Moses to respect the sacred covenant just entered upon by awaiting the further expression of Jehovah's will. In either case a crisis had come.

The Golden Calf.

The nature of the crisis is not indicated by the symbol of deity of which the people made use. They seem to have persuaded Aaron to superintend the making of the image of a young bull, probably of life size, made of wood which was overlaid with gold. It is not necessary to suppose that the bull-worship of Egypt suggested the idea to their minds, for the bull was a favorite emblem of deity among the Semites. In origin this symbolism suggests an agricultural environment, not that of the desert. It had, however, long been in the blood. In old Babylonian temples and palaces the protecting guardianship of God was represented freely by the winged

bulls which stood at the portals. The bull was a natural type of creative strength and energy. To set up Jehovah worship under this symbolism was easy and natural for the Hebrew fugitives, but would put Him at the same time on the familiar, non-ethical basis of their experience with other gods. Moses had the task of relating them to Jehovah by peculiar and permanent ties and on a higher ethical basis. To him, therefore, their action involved a definite and dangerous disloyalty.

The Levites.

The strange passage 32:25-29 bears testimony to the seriousness of this religious error. Moses regarded it as dangerous rebellion, which must be quelled without mercy. Historically it also suggests the reason for the recognition of the tribe of Levi as the one which should furnish those who would serve faithfully the religious needs of the people. Their loyalty may possibly have been stimulated by the fact that Moses himself was a Levite, but it was undoubted and persistent. We have very early testimony to the religious standing of the members of the tribe, even in the days when every man "did that which was right in his own eyes" (Jud. 17:7-11). Israelitish explanations of this preference ran back to those days at Sinai.

The Little Covenant Code.

It is one of the interesting and yet perplexing facts of this important three-stranded history that the "ten words" (34:11-26, 28) which were made a part of the renewed covenant between Jehovah and Israel, were not the same ten as those made a part of the first covenant and reported in chapter 20. More, it is a religious code, devoted to right worship, whereas the other is an ethical code affirming fundamental requirements of right life. There is yet a third code, distinct in position and character (20:23—23:33), beginning and closing (20:23-26 and 23:10-19) with provisos such as we find in the "ten words" of ch. 34, but consisting mainly of "judgments" (21:1) which set forth a code of civil and criminal law,

very simple in character but notable for high standards.

Even the Hebrew historians appear to have been uncertain regarding the exact origin and relative priority of these codes. That of Exodus 20 is the most fundamental; that of ch. 34 is more directly applicable to the prevailing worship. As a fact we would expect from a mind like that of Moses all three kinds of law: civil, ceremonial, and ethical. These codes represent nearly enough the first formulation of each.

It would be interesting and perhaps valuable to compare with some provisions of the largest code the recently published code of King Hammurabi of Babylon, but that is now available, in good editions, for any interested student.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

Here we are brought face to face with the changing attitudes of the unchangeable Jehovah, and Moses is seen as the man pre-eminently fitted for leadership by reason of his fundamental loyalty to God, and tender solicitude for the people.

The Sin of the People.

Any reading of this narrative which draws a distinction between its revelation of God and our knowledge of Him, in the Christian dispensation, is, to say the least, superficial. All the sternness of His word, and the anger and severity of His attitude must be accounted for by the sins of the people. Love insists upon loyalty. A people rebellious and stiffnecked must be dealt with in judgment. Yet if through the intercession and influence of one man they may be brought to repentance, then God alone will repent of evil determined upon them.

We must carefully interpret the action of God by consideration of the circumstances calling it forth. To forget this is to be in danger of thinking of Him as capricious and variable. To remember it is to realize the fact that with Him there "can be no variation,

neither shadow that is cast by turning." Love must smite sin, but must also be tender toward the sinner turning from sin.

The Intercession of Moses.

In many respects we have here the supreme manifestation of the greatness of Moses. In order to see this we must carefully note his method. Take the whole story. First he stands in the presence of God, and then goes forth to the people. Again he returns to God, and again goes forth to the people. And yet a third time he passes into the Divine presence, and a third time confronts the nation.

In his first appearance before God, he is seen as a man pleading with God, not for the people but for God. He urges a threefold plea against consuming the people, but in it there is no note of pity for them. He reminds God of the fact that he delivered them, of the fact that their destruction would reflect upon his character in the eyes of the Egyptians, and finally, that their destruction would break a covenant which he made with their fathers. It is a great picture of his deepest passion, a desire for the honor of God.

In this he prevails, not that he persuades God to change, but that a man of such conviction and devotion will be able to deal with the people, and upon that basis, Jehovah repented.

Moses immediately passes out to the people, and now he is seen acting among them for God. There is no pity in his tone or in his method. The calf is burned with fire, ground to powder, strewed upon the water, and he moves amongst them in a fierce anger which manifests itself in punishment characterized by the shedding of blood.

Now he comes back into the Divine presence, and having triumphed with God and with the people in vindication of God, he becomes the tender suppliant with God for the people themselves. He flings himself into the gap, and prays that if some stroke must fall, it

may fall upon him. Here again he prevails, and with great tenderness Jehovah tells him that the people shall yet be brought into their land. Yet there is a reserve in the Divine message, and an angel is promised to lead them.

This second victory gained, Moses goes forth to the people again. As at the first he acted wholly for the vindication of God, so now he acts with them for their own salvation, calling them to renewed consecration. Passing again into the Divine presence he pleads that the presence of God may go with them, and obtaining this promise also, asks for some personal manifestation of the glory of God, which is granted to him in that wonderful unfolding of the name of Jehovah as a "God merciful and gracious, slow to anger." He returns presently to the people with the tables of the law re-written, and there follows a renewal of the covenant with Jehovah.

Great is the value of this lesson, for it reveals that the deepest passion of the life of a leader must be for the glory of God. Accompanying this, however, and indeed, a necessary outcome of it, there will ever be tender concern for men, and readiness for such vicarious suffering as the sin and failure of the people may demand.

Lesson 18. MOSES AT KADESH-BARNEA. Israel's Cowardice and Punishment. Scripture Section, Num. chs. 13, 14

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University.

The Journey to Kadesh.

Deuteronomy 1:19 declares that Kadesh was the objective of the people of Israel after they left Sinai. No doubt it was one from the very outset of the wandering. Moses needed a real headquarters where his people could abide until prepared for the advance into Canaan. For such a purpose no more favorable site could well have been chosen. Travelers have described it as pleasing, fertile, and capable of affording sustenance for the flocks of a large body of people. A copious spring, gushing forth from the base of a small hill of solid rock, maintains a bountiful supply of excellent water. Henry Clay Trumbull, after re-discovering the spot, established its identification with the actual site in the mind of the Biblical writer.

The Life of Israel at Kadesh.

The importance of Kadesh in the traditions concerning the years which preceded Israel's advance upon Canaan is indicated by such allusions as that found in Judges 11:16 or in the corrected rendering of Deuteronomy 33:2, where the "ten thousands of holy ones" should read "Meribah of Kadesh," as in 32:51. It was at Kadesh that the organization of the people by Moses was continued. Genesis 14:7 identifies with Kadesh the name "The Fountain of Decision," a descriptive name which naturally implies that Kadesh was in Hebrew tradition a site which was either a place at which the will of Jehovah could be ascertained with great accuracy and readiness, or a place which had been distinguished as an administrative center. It is natural to think of Moses as occupying Kadesh and from it as a center completing his work of instruction. It is unlikely that

the oasis was the resting-place of all Israel; it was rather, perhaps, a convenient headquarters and rallying-point.

The Scantiness of our Record.

For the actual life of Israel during this transitional period we are forced to fall back upon the constructive imagination. Any careful reader will see that the story is told in the Bible almost wholly from the standpoint of religious instruction. The narrative in the book of Numbers preserves no details for their historical importance, but relates the incidents of the sending out of spies, the panic, the rebellious attitude of the people, their doom, their impulsive determination to advance, and their repulse, with a view of illustrating the weak faith and instability of the people. Moreover, between the first and the twenty-second verses of the twentieth chapter of Numbers we are to place, according to the narrator, the thirty-eight years of sojourn at Kadesh. We have simply to remember that the Israelites were organized on the nomadic basis, that their distinctive customs and ideas were those of nomads. It is therefore probable that the greater part of the people were roaming during this interval over the adjacent desert, returning periodically, as nomads do to-day, to this favored and popular oasis.

The Outbreak against Moses.

The records indicate repeated acts of rebellion against their great leader. A careful reading of Numbers 16 reveals a double conspiracy against his authority, of Korah on the one hand and of Dathan and Abiram, the princes, on the other, both being sternly and successfully quelled. Such jealous outbreaks were to be expected from the natural tribal leaders. We have reason to think that these were only typical of many more. They were promptly ignored in the main by our writers, since they only served to indicate and to emphasize the growing unification of the people, a unity not gained at the expense of the proper independence of the class, but one

which may have interfered considerably with the arbitrary authority of the clan leaders. Moses was working for the higher unity of the people, that to which a common religious objective and common religious habits would contribute.

The Foreign Element.

The Israel of David and Solomon was a people of widely varying elements. The traditions recognize the constant influx of those of non-Israelitish birth from the very beginning. The sojourn in the desert of which our lesson treats afforded an opportunity for such addition of which the nomad population was not slow to take advantage. Israel had great assimilating power, because of the simplicity of her organization and the variety of her type. The absorption of Kenites and other foreigners only broadened and made sturdier the Israelitish type.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

About eighteen months had passed since the renewal of the Covenant. Much had taken place in that time. Moses had received the pattern, and erected the tabernacle. The nation had been consolidated upon the basis of the covenant. So far as outward organization is concerned, Israel is ready to enter and possess the land. The order has gone forth to strike tents, and take up the march. The incidents of our lesson occurred at Kadesh-barnea, on the very border of the Land of Promise.

The Rebellion of the People.

The sending of the spies was really a test of the condition of the people, not that God might discover that condition, but that He might reveal it to them. This was the perpetual principle of His dealings with them. He led them to humble them, to prove them. God knew the land, and the conditions existing therein. He also knew perfectly the true condition of their heart,

and that though the external organization was complete, they were not ready for possession, and were unfit for the strenuous demands which would be made upon them.

These facts known to Him, must be demonstrated to them, and for that reason twelve are chosen, one out of each tribe, to go up and view the land. In examining their report let us notice what they all saw, what ten saw, and what two saw.

They all saw the land fruitful, and flowing with milk and honey. They all saw walled cities. They all saw the Nephilim, or giants, inhabiting the land.

Ten of them saw themselves as others saw them. "We were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so were we in their sight." Comparing themselves with the foe, they became conscious of how they looked in the sight of the foe, and the result was cowardice and fear.

Two of them saw themselves as God saw them. "We are able to overcome it If Jehovah delight in us, then he will bring us into the land and give it unto us." That tells the whole story of difference. Ten omit God in their estimate of the forces, and difficulties are magnified into impossibilities. Two include God, and victory became certain. Yet the proportion was ten to two, and this meant the utter unfitness of the people. Murmuring against God and rebellion against Moses followed, and but for the direct intervention of Jehovah, the ten would have slain the two.

Thus the whole scene reveals their incapacity to accomplish that which God determined concerning them. Jehovah accepts their valuation of themselves. If in the making of that valuation they exclude Him, then they cannot overcome, and consequently must not be permitted to attempt it. When presumptuously, and in spite of their revelation, they made the attempt, they were defeated.

The Intercession of Moses.

On this occasion Moses again appears as an intercessor with God. And here again the fundamental rea-

son of his intercession is the same. He pleads with God for the honor of the name of God among the people. There is, however, an added argument in his intercession. He pleads with Him that He shall fulfil in the experiences of the people that revelation which He made of Himself to Moses on the occasion of his former mediation. His quotation here of the gracious terms of that revelation is full of interest. The fuller knowledge of God which came to him then, becomes a new ground of successful appeal in this hour of trial.

The Divinely Inflicted Punishment.

And finally the lesson reveals to us the same unchanging Jehovah. His purpose must be accomplished even though it tarry. Evil must be judged, and the judgment is according to the thought of the men who are unworthy and unfit. Excluding God from their calculation they expected to die in the wilderness. So shall it be. And yet there is discrimination in the carrying out of the sentence. Caleb and Joshua are ultimately to enter the land. There is also a touch of rare beauty in the words, "Your little ones that ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have rejected." Their false pity for their children supposed that they would be involved in their own catastrophe. God's true love for the children delivers them from the penalty of the sins of the fathers.

Lesson 19. MOSES AND THE MARCH TO CANAAN. The Conquest East of the Jordan. Scripture Section, Num. 20; 1-22: 1; Deut. ch. 34

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

The Kinsmen of Israel.

Underlying all theories of the origin of Israel are three facts: That a large proportion at least of the Israel which reached the land of Canaan had spent some time in the desert just before; that this desert sojourn left its mark upon them in many ways, exhibited by their long persisting social organization after the clan type, many special observances and a passionate love of personal freedom; and that they absorbed during their sojourn an unknown number of non-Israelites into their own ranks.

One other fact is emphasized by this lesson, viz., the recognition by Israel of her kinship with the semi-nomadic peoples, the Edomites and Moabites, as well as other clans which wandered in the desert regions. With them she did not care to quarrel; their interests she made her own; their peril she shared; their enemy she conquered.

The Amorites.

About the earliest population of Canaan we know very little. The names Emim, Zuzim, Rephaim, afford no real insight into ethnological problems. And in any case this earlier population had been to a large extent annihilated or absorbed in the unending series of invassions and conflicts which were the portion of unhappy Canaan for the century or more preceding the days of Joshua, and left it a depleted, weakened, disorganized land.

Such a situation was a signal to outside powers. Egypt, exhausted by her successful repulses of the "barbarians" from the north, and threatened by the rise of

a strong empire in Ethiopia, wholly abandoned her Asiatic ambitions for several centuries. Babylonia, checked by her growing vassal kingdom, Assyria, no longer made attempts at control of the "coast land." The foes of Canaan were of lesser magnitude. The Biblical narratives mention the Amorites, whom many regard as really Canaanites, as pressing down southward into Canaan and seeking new homes. The Egyptian records of the preceding generations testify to such an advance into Canaan of notable enemies. Whence they came is still obscure. The Israelitish clans also pressing forward from the south came into conflict with them.

The Conquest of East-Jordan.

Under these circumstances the Biblical narrative of the conquest of East-Jordan finds support. If the original possessors of this extensive country had been dispossessed and driven out, as the narrative of Numbers 21 implies, by the Amorites, the swiftness of the conquest by Israel is fairly well explained. The war was between two rivals each prepared for battle and risking its whole future upon the result. The Amorites were defeated, their leaders destroyed, their lands appropriated, and the bulk of their people, no doubt, absorbed. Even so the campaign was extraordinarily brief, since the region in which the war was waged is a rugged, readily defensible country. Self-confidence begotten of continued success may have led the Amorites to neglect precautions and to offer their wily and resourceful opponent, Joshua, chances of which he was not slow to avail himself.

That in some form the conquest was really accomplished the history of Israel shows. In Saul's day the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead (1 Sam. 11) affirmed their kinship to Israel. The son of Saul (2 Sam. 2) fled to Mahanaim, just as David did (2 Sam. 17:24; 19:32) years later. All Gilead was naturally loyal to the dynasty which reigned. The inhabitants of East-Jordan were not foreigners, but faithful Israelites.

The Personality of Moses.

With the beginning of the conquest the real leadership passed from Moses to Joshua. Yet in many respects the last year of the great moulder of his people was the greatest. It testified to his farsightedness that the simple, desert type of life was not satisfactory to him. It was more easily controlled but less capable of development. It could not produce a people capable of wide usefulness. The approach to Canaan tested also his resourcefulness, diplomacy and power of decision. He avoided unnecessary collisions with Edom and Moab, but struck the Amorites at the right time.

But Moses is to be tested by his whole career. Whether it shows him to have been the greatest genius that Israel ever produced may be disputed, but he was unquestionably one of the first three. He was a born leader of men, sympathetic yet commanding, an organizer, yet capable of taking a foremost place in action, fair-minded, yet of abundant energy, patient, yet persistent. His best qualities were native to him, yet he had all the advantages of heritage and training. His greatest achievement was his successful stamping of the Israelitish consciousness with a sense of loyalty to Jehovah and an expectancy of service to be rendered in His name.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

The history of the people here chronicled is full of interest. It stands forth among the most thrilling pages of the nation's story. With all their experience of God and of their own unfitness, we find the same mistakes constantly recurring. Incapacity is, apparently, so deeply rooted, that instead of reforming under the wise leadership of Moses, they seem more confirmed in their habits of blundering. Murmurings, defeats, repentance, songs and victories, these are the records which tell the story of their doings. Yet God is ever seen full of resource, delivering them from self-provoked

calamities, and with infinite patience chastising Israel toward perfection.

On the other hand, we see the limitations of human greatness. Moses the superb leader, incomparable in extreme difficulties, now pathetically fails. Anger overthrows judgment, and impatience brought defeat.

The Failure of Moses.

The murmuring of the people drove him to God. As in days past, so now, he turns to Jehovah with his difficulties. From God he received explicit directions, how and what to do. These directions proved the unfailing patience, the long-suffering mercy of the Lord. Not a word was spoken by Jehovah to justify the anger of Moses. Yet in the carrying out of these instructions a spirit of indignation was manifested, both in his striking the rock instead of speaking to it, and in his address to the people, "Hear now, ye rebels, shall we bring you forth water out of this rock?" The psalmist gives us a key to the fault, "he spake unadvisedly with his lips" (Ps. 106:33). He manifested a spirit of anger where God had only shown pity. Hence the Divine judgment, "Ye shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them."

It is a most solemn and searching revelation. There seemed to be such good cause for anger. These people were so trying and full of complaint. Yet a provoked and angry spirit is utterly out of place in the presence of wrong. There is to be no compromise with evil, but evil cannot be rebuked by a spirit which is evil in itself. Wrong is never the divine agent for accomplishing right. Sin has no ministry in the kingdom of God. How graphically this reveals the fact that the matter of supreme importance in a life is its temper and tone! A passion for righteousness exhibiting itself in unrighteous anger is in itself unrighteous.

The punishment was severe both to Moses and Aaron, who neither of them were permitted to enter that land toward which their eyes had been set in wistful longing.

They also could not enter in because of unbelief, which manifested itself in a spirit which being contrary to the mind of God, proved essential lack of confidence in Him.

The Passing of Moses.

The punishment is exhausted in the exclusion from the land. Beyond that the story of the going of these brothers is full of beauty. Aaron saw the continuity of his office indicated in the robing of his son, and then in the company of his brother and son, died on the mountain top. The picture of Moses' passing is truly magnificent: in possession of all his faculties; in the very act of communion with God; viewing actually though at a distance that land toward which he had moved in faith; then dying, and being buried by God in a great seclusion free from all intrusion.

Lessons.

Disobedience bears its fruits in the very best of men. The matter of greatest importance in any life, and the most difficult to realize, is the temper which co-operates in tenderness with God, even in the midst of the most provoking circumstances and people.

How perpetually the very best men fail of the highest through some shortcoming in spirit! It is indeed the perpetual story of human life even in its successes. So near to a promised land, and yet shut out because of a lacking quality. Only One Person in all history has ever gone quietly on until the utmost goal was won. He could say, "All authority hath been given unto Me."

Yet it is almost impossible to study this lesson without thinking of the transfiguration, and how the Son in His perfection brought Moses in to stand where in his own right he had failed to stand.

He also will bring us by His grace into all we fail of, if we trust Him even about our failures.

Lesson 20. JOSHUA THE COURAGEOUS LEADER. Israel Entering the Promising Land. Scripture Section, Josh. chs. 1-4

I. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

From the Desert to Canaan.

It was a momentous transformation through which Israel passed when the people exchanged the desert as a home for the fertile land of Canaan. It was the transference from a nomadic to an agricultural civilization, the beginning of a far-reaching change in relationship, customs and ideals, a change which brought evil results as well as good, but was essential if the clans of Israel were to become a nation and that nation a leader.

The thirty-second chapter of Deuteronomy is a stirring story in verse of this change, of its immediate effect upon Israel, an interpretation of its significance, and a declaration of the obligation which it laid upon the nation.

The Conquest of West-Jordan.

That the Israelites crossed the river Jordan and took gradual possession of all Canaan is unquestionable. By the days of Eli and Samuel they were evidently regarded by the Philistines as the sole possessors of the land. But the books of Joshua and Judges give evidence of the fact that for a long time, perhaps for several generations after the initiation of the conquest, the Canaanitish inhabitants held their own, particularly in the plains. On the fair principle of interpreting a book by itself the student discovers that certain passages in the book of Joshua which apparently testify to the sweeping destruction of the Canaanites and the dashing conquest of the land must be interpreted as generalizations. There was a conquest and a bloody one, but not as complete nor as merciless as first impressions suggest.

As in case of other historical episodes referred to by

the Biblical historians, the narrative of the conquest given in the book of Joshua is one-sided. The actual conquest was a much more complex affair. Besides the bold and rapid advance under Joshua's leadership, there were many unchronicled sallies on a small scale, resulting in the lodgment of Israelitish groups on the coveted soil. There is a tendency among scholars to recognize one only of these methods, to describe the conquest as made piecemeal in the course of a generation or two, without any battles, and under no distinctive leadership, or to declare that it was sudden, cruel and sweeping, a campaigning directed by Joshua. There is good reason for thinking that both methods were actually put in practice.

The Personality of Joshua.

The leader Joshua is the hero of one of the finest portraitures of the Old Testament. Like that of Jacob, its excellence has caused suspicions of its reality. It seemed to be made to order. Without some such personal leadership, however, it is difficult to explain the continuing sense of unity which characterized the people as a whole, however scattered and independent, or their location by principal groups at the truly strategic centres of western Palestine, or the confidence and prowess which they exhibited at times of genuine stress under one who had the gift and tradition of leadership. These results do not come by chance. The earliest narratives of the conquest make Joshua the leader of one section of the people, that which established itself on the hills of Central Palestine. It was the most representative section and the most powerful. With it Joshua's influence was dominant. His straightforwardness and simplicity made him an apt successor to Moses, wholly faithful to his leader's traditions.

The Point of Attack.

The narrative in Joshua fits together. The armed invasion of Western Palestine by Joshua and his follow-

ers requires a crossing over the Jordan near Jericho. From no other spot could an attacking force achieve results so rapidly as from that region. From it radiated the natural passageways up into the heart of the country. The traditions credit Joshua with decision, courage and energy, but testify as well to the shrewdness with which the preliminaries to his campaigns were arranged. Jericho, according to all accounts, required no strategy; it was not conquered by the army. Joshua did not make it his base of operation, but established a permanent camp as a more suitable and more readily defended site. Then he was ready for the campaigns which should quell all opposition to the settlement of the Israelites in the land.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

The history of Israel now enters upon a new period. The whole unbelieving generation has passed away, Joshua and Caleb alone remaining according to the divine promise (Num. 14:30). The last hindrance to entrance was Moses. All other things being ready, God has removed him, and the word comes to his successor, "Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise."

Our present lesson has to do with the appointment of Joshua as the first action. The nation must see and feel that the mantle of Moses has fallen upon Joshua. We have therefore in this election to leadership, subjects of great importance. They may be considered in connection with:

1. The Commission of Joshua by God.
2. The Recognition of Joshua by the People.
3. The First Movement.

1. The Commission of Joshua by God.

In the divine economy the moment and the man arrive coincidentally. This is the one certainty. As soon as Moses is dead, Joshua is commanded to arise. How often it is impossible to find the man until the moment

comes for his appearing! Frequently men cannot name a successor when the question arises prospectively, "Who will take up this work?" The whole history of the world reveals how constantly God finds him in unexpected places. It would be utterly false, however, to lay this down as an invariable rule. The present case is a remarkable exception. The appointment of Joshua is one of the instances of natural succession. For forty years he had been closely associated with Moses in all the great work of leading this people. He was "Moses' minister" (1:1), and consequently familiar with the responsibilities of office.

The lesson of importance here is that the man that God finds is the man qualified for the work. If he already have the relation of natural succession, then he is appointed. If, on the other hand, no such man is in view, then he will be found where men are not looking for him.

The appointment of Joshua is characterized by remarkable promises made to him, and clearly defined responsibilities laid upon him. These promises are to be found in Josh. 1:3, 5, 9. They are comprehensive and inspiring. Complete conquest and divine companionship are to be his "whithersoever he goeth." But note the responsibilities. If the promise be that every place the sole of his foot treads on is given to him, his responsibility is to set the sole of his foot upon the place. If the promise is that no man shall be able to stand before him, the responsibility is that he faces these foes as a courageous leader.

Then, moreover, there are responsibilities as to personal character. He is to be strong and courageous, and this strength and courage are to be the outcome of his obedience to the law, which in turn is to be maintained by a perpetual meditation thereupon.

2. The Recognition of Joshua by the People.

His first relation to the people is a revelation of his obedience to God. On the evidence of this authority

men listen to his words. He commands that they prepare to move forward, and immediately there is the response of obedience. Like begets like. It is to such authority, expressive of submission to a higher, that the people are ever willing to submit themselves. Sincerity never speaks in vain. The divine force behind truth is realized in whatever form it appears before men. The secret of power to lead is power to obey. Be, and through us God will do.

3. The First Movement.

The first movement in the leadership of Joshua is characterized by his caution, his confidence, and his courage. Cautiously he sends spies to Jericho. In confidence he announces that God is about to do a great thing, and therefore the people must consecrate themselves to him. His courage is manifested in that even before the wonder-working power of God is seen, he marshals the people, and sets them in order. All this reveals the preparation of the man for his work. It is immediately answered by God in the great deliverance wrought. The moral effect of this first movement upon the people with regard to their relation to Joshua is declared in the words, "On that day Jehovah magnified Joshua in the sight of all Israel, and they feared him as they feared Moses all the days of his life." A radiant revelation of the truth that whosoever may be called to leadership in the enterprise of God, has but to magnify Jehovah before the people to be magnified of Jehovah in the eyes of the people.

Lesson 21. JOSHUA IN CANAAN. The Conquest West of the Jordan. Scripture Section, Josh. chs. 5-11

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

Joshua the Soldier.

The narratives of the book of Joshua describe the leader of the attacking party as a good soldier. It was good military strategy to penetrate the hill-country of western Palestine from the vicinity of Jericho because the natural defenses of the country were adjusted to invasions from South or North, because no one could surely anticipate by which of several passes he would advance, and because the capture of a stronghold on the ridge of the hill-country would divide the forces opposed to him, enable him to reduce them in sections, and give him a lodgment in the very heart of the land.

These narratives enable us to praise his methods as well as his genius. He "rose up early," or marched all night and took his foes by surprise. His blows were decisive. He followed up a victory until the tributary territory was conquered, and the dangerous leaders slain. From the fact that the book of Judges reports the Canaanites in active and even dangerous possession of localities reported as thoroughly conquered by Joshua, it is probable that except in cases of prolonged resistance he contented himself with the submission of the inhabitants.

The conquest was not, however, a mere matter of clever strategy or military skill. Joshua felt that he was fighting Jehovah's battles as His lieutenant, the true leader of the host being Jehovah the God of battles (5:13 ff.). There was no pretense about it. The spirit of Cromwell in his struggle for popular liberty was that of Joshua in his endeavor to settle his people in a land which a century of fierce warfare had depopulated and ravaged, and which invited the appropriation of a home-

seeking people. The Canaanitish inhabitants in no sense occupied the territory. With few exceptions they held the plains, while the Israelites established themselves upon the hills, which were theirs for the taking.

The Campaigns.

Western Palestine divides naturally into three portions, and historically has always been so divided. Judea, Samaria, and Galilee were only successors of Judah, Ephraim and the North. The line of separation between the first two sections is practically a line drawn across at Bethel from the Jordan to the Plain. When Joshua had captured Ai, Bethel and Gibeon, he had wholly separated the southern Canaanites from those of the central section. The battle of Beth-horon put an end to the organized opposition in the South. Josh. 8: 30-35; 19: 50 and 24: 16-18 imply the similar conquest of the central hill-country. Chapter 11 refers to a northern campaign. With these three successful campaigns a foothold was achieved, firm upon the hills, precarious on the plains.

The Real Result.

The first chapter of Judges gives an accurate rescript of the resulting conditions in Western Palestine. The earlier population, by the very configuration of the country, was segregated, even where it was reasonably strong, into little groups, which did not unite for any purpose whatever. Only at or near the great plain of Esdraelon were the Canaanites strong enough to meditate a general movement against the Israelitish invaders. Through the country as a whole the two peoples dwelt side by side, the Israelites gradually assimilating the weaker Canaanites. This was a slow process for the first generation or so, but thereafter was so speedy that the Canaanite was only a vague tradition in the days of the double monarchy.

The Promised Land.

In this curious way Israel came to her own, to the

land which she needed as much as the enterprise and intelligence of the Old World needed North America. Palestine was Israel's opportunity. Situated so as to be sensitive to every phase of the progress of the world of that day, the nation was forced to make its ideas of God expand with this progress. It became the great interpreter of God in His world to the world.

Israel did not find Palestine altogether a paradise. Its "milk and honey" flowed only here and there. It was rather a land which spoke eloquently of God's providence, "a land of hills and valleys which drinketh water of the rain of heaven, a land which Jehovah, thy God careth for: the eyes of Jehovah, thy God, are always upon it from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year." It was the land of promise.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

This lesson gives us a page full of interest. It is characterized by remarkable evidences of the military genius of Joshua. His rapid movement to the centre of the land, and the capture of Jericho and Ai, followed without any hesitation by the conquest of the south, and then by that of the north against the confederacy of kings, is among the most conspicuous pages in the history of warfare. No mistakes in leadership hinder the triumphal march of Israel's warriors. We hear the tread of an invincible army wisely led from victory to victory.

There are important lessons for us along two lines of consideration:

1. The Secrets of the Success.
2. The General Meaning of the Whole Story.

1. The Secrets of the Success.

The first impression made by the study of the story is that of Joshua's consciousness of God, and his subsequent indifference to all the difficulties presenting

themselves to him. Never does the magnitude of his task appal him. It has to be done, and he does it. With the exception of himself and Caleb, all the generation of the people which at Kadesh-barnea had been more conscious of the difficulties than of God, has passed away. Forty years before these two men had seen God, and had believed in the possibility of realizing His purpose in spite of giants and walled cities. Now that Joshua is appointed leader, he acts in the power of this consciousness, and is seen victorious over every successive obstacle presented.

This attitude is not due to any lack of appreciation on his part of the difficulties confronting him. On the contrary, he is revealed to us as a man keenly conscious of their existence, seeing them in their bearings and understanding their true nature. While therefore he acts in the consciousness of a divine commission, which always means divine enabling, he nevertheless brings into play his natural skill and sound common sense. As we have seen, his strategic move of capturing the centre and moving out therefrom south and north, is evidence of his judgment and fitness to command. This natural fitness is conditioned by his unswerving loyalty to God, which expresses itself in dependence upon Him, and immediate obedience to His guidance.

Through all the movements Joshua is seen as a man supremely conscious and determined that right relationships with God shall be fulfilled and maintained. His insistence upon the renewal of the rite of circumcision brings back the whole nation into recognition of the covenant relationships with God. His reading of the whole law in the presence of the people (8: 34, 35) reminds them again that the terms of the covenant can only be fulfilled as they are obedient to the will of God in all the details of life.

And yet once more. The severe and yet unnecessary discipline exercised in the case of Achan shows how conscious Joshua was that these people could not be victorious in the accomplishment of the divine work of

purifying, while impurity obtained within their own ranks. Sin is sin wherever it exists, and must perish.

2. The General Movement.

In any study of this section, the original purpose of God must be remembered. This nation has been raised up in order that through them all the nations of the earth might be blessed. Their bringing into the land is not merely the bestowment upon them of a country for a possession, in order to which other nations are ruthlessly swept out.

The method which appears to be severe, and has often been criticised by near-sightedness, was absolutely necessary. The corruption of the land was great, and the only hope for posterity was the clearing out of a corrupt people, and the planting in their place of a people obedient to law, and living a life of cleanness and consequent strength.

It was the process employed by the surgeon, when ruthlessly and yet carefully he cuts out that which is corrupt, in order to the restoration of health to the whole body. This larger outlook will reveal that the whole movement was one which proves the love of God for unborn generations.

It is always necessary to read any present action in the divine government in the light of the whole purpose, and in its bearing on final issues.

In order to co-operate with God in these great movements of His love, it is necessary that there shall be the fulfilment in personal life of the ideals presented to it.

Lesson 22. GIDEON THE HEROIC JUDGE. Israel Delivered from the Midianites. Scripture Section Jud. 6: 1-8: 28.

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

The Days of the Judges.

When a strong body of Israelites crossed over the Jordan, determined to obtain in Canaan suitable abiding places for themselves, a new era began for them as a people. The old nomadic life was past, although for many generations its stamp was to be discernible upon them. The realization of this fact of change is given expression in the fifth chapter of the book of Joshua. It was a change from desert life and custom to an agricultural, settled civilization, from life moulded on the whole by the usages of the clan to life which was gradually adjusted to the mixed community basis. On the earlier basis the growth of a real nationality was next to impossible.

The change from a pastoral to an agricultural life, although significant and salutary, was attended by real danger. It meant a rise in civilization but the introduction as well to dangerously attractive debasing phases of religious life, all the more influential because encountered in an organized form. The inhabitants of Canaan were a very religious people. They believed in a multitude of petty deities, each the patron of a district and the giver of its crops (Hosea 2: 5). They were fond of religious festivals, which readily became revels. When the Philistines began to enjoy the resources of Canaan, had settled down in the midst of its established modes of social, civic and religious activity, and had begun the process of assimilation and absorption, they were sorely tempted to unite with the service of Jehovah the worship of local deities too. This was all the easier since, as Jephthah's naive remark (Jud. 11: 23, 24) indicates, the average Israelite was a monolater rather than a monotheist. He regarded Jehovah as his lawful deity,

but did not question the existence of other deities, who had other and parallel responsibilities and territories. The conquest of Canaan did not prove to a thinker of that day that the Baals of that country were non-existent, but only that Jehovah was a greater god. How the Israelites yielded to the influences of their environment is graphically told in the beautiful poem of the 32nd chapter of Deuteronomy, and more definitely alluded to by 1 Kings 14: 23, 24; Hos. 9: 10; 2 Kings 17: 9-12.

Duration and Significance of the Period.

The length of the period from the death of Moses to the days of Samuel is quite uncertain, despite the apparent profusion of chronological data. Many of the numbers are conventional, forty years representing a generation or a period of time not accurately determinable. Added together the duration of the "oppressions" and intervals amount to 410 years. It is altogether probable that some of the dominations were contemporaneous, and that two centuries or so is a sufficient allowance of time for all that is related.

This period was of a preparatory, intermediate character. Israel was gradually finding herself, discovering at once her weakness and her strength, falling into temptation and struggling through it to a better basis of existence. Religiously she borrowed from Canaanitish worship (although at heavy cost) a social interpretation of worship which the world has never ceased to approve. Politically their adverse experiences forced upon the tribes a desire for union and a willingness to sacrifice some of their independence for the sake of it, thus opening the way to naturalization.

Its Achievements.

Israel's gradual ascendency over the Canaanites the book of Judges accounts for in three ways: good leadership, religious unity, and religious superiority. The leaders were of every type. Distinctive among them were Jephthah, Barak and Deborah, and Gideon, who doubtless represent many other equally resourceful Is-

raelites. The people were capable of true heroism. This they exhibit most notably under the influence of an appeal to their common loyalty to Jehovah. Such a motive rallied a number of the tribesmen to fight against the confederated Canaanites of the north (Jud. 5). It stood the test of the very strong temptation to adopt the local deities. This faithfulness to Jehovah and to each other is the strongest possible proof that there was after all in the minds of the Israelites a consciousness of a difference—not strongly marked but real—between their own religious standards and those of their contemporaries. The work of Moses was not in vain. There were never wanting men, like Gideon, who could continue the spirit of his labors. The people gradually came together into a working unity. The two centuries of bitter experience was a period of advance. The result was worth the cost.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

Introductory.

The times have changed and the change has brought reverses to Israel. Instead of being victorious and in possession of the land, the Chosen People are harassed by marauders and sorely oppressed. The invincible host under Joshua is now a scattered band dwelling in caves and strongholds of their own making for safety. This condition is the result of infidelity to the covenant. Failing in their integrity Israel became a prey to their foes. Their enemies were never superior to Israel and Jehovah. They were always superior to Israel alone. Consequently with Israel's disloyalty came weakness and defeat, until in the bitterness of disaster they remembered Jehovah and cried for deliverance. Gideon is God's providential man, Jehovah's answer to the people's prayer. He comes as a reformer and deliverer.

Gideon's Preparations.

1. Notice first how God found this man in the cir-

cumstances in which He invariably finds men whom He calls to conspicuous service. He is about his simple daily duty, and faithful to it, "beating out wheat in the winepress," conscientiously discharging the common labors of the day. In this we have a revelation of the character of the man. Fidelity in the commonplace is the true proof of fitness for the special. The man faithful in that which is least has the capacity and endurance which mark him out for arduous work. Obscurity is the training ground for prominent service.

2. In the midst of his daily work Gideon was profoundly conscious of the terrible degradation of his people, and deeply troubled and discontented. This very sense of need and discontent was his might (see 6: 13, 14). It is when the iron has entered a man's soul, and he is conscious and ashamed of failure that he is prepared to act. Ignorance of that condition is responsible for much inactivity, and apparent indifference, while the bitterness of shame often leads to awakening and mighty forces.

3. When the divine call came he commenced his reform in his own house, breaking down the altar of Baal there. There can be no public reformation which has not commenced in the area of personal life and responsibility. No arm is strong to smite evil in high places that has not demolished the idols of home. There must be no partiality in the treatment of wrongs, because of the place of their birth.

4. Facing his new work Gideon keenly realized his own incompetence, and was deeply suspicious of himself. This again is a prime necessity for co-operation with God. The sublime dignity of divine work creates a reverent humility, and throws a man absolutely back upon God for strength. One of the hardest lessons to learn, and yet one of the most necessary, is that of our own insufficiency.

5. Finally he was determined to be sure of God, and so tested Him by the fleece. This exceeding cautious-

ness is the final proof of his strength. Happy is the man who so fears to move save in the divinely marked pathway, that he takes time to find out the will of God with certainty.

Gideon's Power.

1. Convinced by all tests of his divine appointment and equipment, he now dared everything for God. His whole action illustrates this. When once the heart is assured of a divine call, then there must be courageous conduct through which the purpose of God may be achieved.

2. Not courage only, but disinterestedness, so far as personal ambition is concerned. The presence of this spirit through all is manifested in that, when victory was won, he declined to be made ruler, declaring that Jehovah was Ruler alone.

Gideon's Campaign and Victory.

1. The sifting of his army under divine direction is a remarkable proof of his confidence in God. To a man who trusted in numbers rather than in God it would have been a terrible experience to see the thinning of the ranks. How much of the heartbreak of to-day is due to the substitution of hosts for the Lord of hosts!

2. The principle of sifting is not capricious but infinitely wise. The men God cannot work with are those who are fearful and afraid, and those who take unnecessary time over necessary things. Such principles of sifting would greatly thin the ranks of the church's soldiers even to-day.

3. The victory was of God, yet the stratagem made use of was another demonstration of the capacity of the human leader. Men should ever plan as though all depended upon them, and trust and obey, knowing that all depends upon God.

Lesson 23. SAMUEL'S FIRST MESSAGE FROM GOD. Religious Decadence in Israel Rebuked. Scripture Section, 1 Sam. chs. 1-4

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

Religious and Social Conditions in Israel at this Time.

To justly characterize the actual religious life of Israel at the time of Samuel's birth is not a simple matter. That the different tribes possessed along with their independence and relative isolation, a sense of religious unity which could in emergencies be relied upon to bring them into a common relationship, has already been pointed out, as well as the fact that their bitter jealousy of one another prevented their loyalty to Jehovah from having its fullest effect. A true political unification was the natural precursor and accompaniment of a strong religious development. The former had been suggested during the days of Gideon (Jud. 8:22), and the idea of it supported both by the reverses of the people and by their achievements in war. The latter was no less clearly under way.

In the narrative of the book of Judges we find exhibited varying types of religious development. There is no lack of a real religious feeling, but, as in the Middle Ages, this often took the form of a loyalty to Jehovah expressed by deeds rather than character. Samson deemed himself a loyal Israelite and a sincere follower of Jehovah when he was giving the Philistines the utmost possible annoyance or danger. Jephthah fought stoutly for Gilead in Jehovah's name, yet acknowledged the equal dignity of Chemosh in his own territory (11: 24) and believed that he must sacrifice human life rather than fail to fulfil a vow rashly made. The migrating tribe of Dan (ch. 18) did not wish to be without a priest, yet did not scruple to put to the sword a remotely situated, unsuspecting community at Laish and take the city for themselves, nor to steal away from Micah, the Ephraimite, both his priest and his shrine.

The Real Religious Leaders.

Over against these exhibitions of a crude, rude religious feeling may be placed the notable manifestation of zeal, patriotism and religious fervor on the part of Deborah and Barak (ch. 5) and Gideon's true heroism, sustained by the thought of Jehovah's support (6:11-24). The story of Ruth and of the boyhood of Samuel introduce a picture of simple, serious, domestic religious life in Judah and in Ephraim which justifies the conclusion that the book of Judges gives, after all, only one aspect of the situation. The age was rude; the people as a whole were busied with the struggle for maintenance; but all the time there were forces at work which were fitting them for higher things. Soon after the initial conquests the working center of the religious life of the people had been transferred from Gilgal to Shiloh. There the tent of meeting (Josh. 18:1) was set up. In time this was superseded by a more permanent sanctuary (1 Sam. 1:9) of which the family of Eli was in full charge at the time of Samuel's birth. The annual feast of Shiloh, mentioned both in 1 Sam. 1:3 and in Jud. 21:19, fostered a sense of substantial unity, whether it was of universal interest or not. It kept alive traditional obligations.

The Personality of Samuel.

The most cogent argument for a well-defined religious growth here and there is the unquestionable production of such personalities as Eli, Hannah and Samuel. It would seem that the writer of 1 Samuel realized this, for the story of the first four chapters is virtually a character sketch. The aged priest was a genuinely good man, although unable to cope with the situation which confronted his declining days. The mother of Samuel is depicted as a woman of noble ideals and deep devotion. More than she did none could do in those days. Samuel was the worthy heir of such parentage. Reared in the midst of religious laxity, unrestrained greed, and unblushing corruption, he remained absolutely pure-

minded, sound of heart, and commendable in the sight of every one who knew him. But Samuel was also one of those rare religious leaders who are to be accounted for only in part by heredity, and who help to make environments. His type was that represented by an Abraham or a Moses, one who is sensitive to God's presence, who can in truth receive Divine impressions and translate them into human speech and action. That he was of this sort all the people came to believe, hence there opened before him a possibility of influence which none of his immediate predecessors had been able to command.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

Introductory.

The condition of affairs in Israel is now even more terrible than in the days of Gideon. The process of degeneration has gone very far forward. The supreme evidence of this is to be found in the appalling condition of the priesthood. Hophni and Phineas, men of the regular succession, and actively engaged in the service of the sacred office, are guilty of the most terrible sins. What must have been the condition of the people? The time for a new reformation and departure has come, and in the present lesson there is introduced the man who is to be the instrument of bringing it about. The most important lessons of the study are those which we learn concerning the methods of God in various ways.

God's Judgment on Sin.

The first impression is that of the sure judgment of God on sin. The defeat of the nation, the terrible and tragic death of Hophni, Phineas, Eli, and the wife of Phineas, together with the terrible name of the child born in the midst of the judgment—Ichabod—all teach the solemn and searching truth that covenant relationships cannot protect from nemesis when covenant responsibilities are forgotten. Verily it is a fearful thing

to fall into the hands of the living God. It is not the office which brings blessing, but the condition of those in it. The ark of the covenant is as useless as any ordinary chest when all it represents is denied by the sin of a people.

The Responsibility of Parents.

The responsibility of parents is enforced in two ways. Hannah's devotion of her boy to God is a beautiful example of the true relationship. It is not given to all parents to give their children to the actual service of the sanctuary, but it is the privilege of all to give them to God. Does not the omission of this consecration of child life largely account for its loss to the Church, and for the absence of spiritual tuition in the home? Children definitely devoted to God, and then nurtured and trained in the light of that fact, must also, when at years of discretion, personally submit themselves to Him, but it will be easier for them to do so because of this training. Happy indeed is the child who has been brought up as one devoted to God, and blessed are the parents who keep this aim in view in the training of child life. Eli is held responsible for the sins of his sons. It is a most solemn and awful fact, but it is a fact. The man as revealed would seem to be of easy and kindly nature, and therein was his failure. The charge against him is that "he restrained them not." It is of the essence of cruelty to allow any child to run riot in the way of his own inclination, and parents doing so are held responsible by God. Let the solemn lesson be deeply pondered.

God's Respect for Character.

God's respect for character is manifested in His choice of Samuel, and His appearing to him. Here indeed is a case of His hiding things from the wise and prudent, and revealing them to babes. He passed by all the priests, even though they were of His own appointment, and to the child Samuel made revelations of supreme importance to the nation, and that simply because of the child's loyalty to His laws, and purity of heart.

One of the most terrible mistakes that men have continued to make in successive ages is that of imagining that God is limited by mere officialism. He is always limited by character, not by caste. Personal integrity counts for more than does office. The only permanent channel through which divine communications run is the heart devoted to God. He will ever turn from king, priest and prophet, to shepherd, child or herdsman, where the former have violated truth and the latter are loyal thereto. By such action He cancels the authority of those from whom He turns, and transfers it to those whom He accepts. The only truly official position then is that of divine appointment, and the condition upon which He appoints is that of character. The pure in heart see God, and receive His revelation. Therefore He passed Eli, and appeared to the little child.

The Divine Love.

The supreme lesson of this study is that of the strength of the divine love which triumphs over all human failure, and opens a new door of escape, even through judgment, in order that His sinning children might be restored, and His infinite purpose consummated.

Lesson 24. SAMUEL THE JUDGE AND SEER. The Beginning of a New Era in Israel. Scripture Section, 1 Sam. 7 :2—12 :25

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

The Philistine Invasion.

The event which evoked and exhibited the influence of Samuel over the Israelites and revealed his power of leadership was the Philistine oppression. It was not an isolated event, but rather a continuous experience for more than a generation. The disaster of Aphek, which gave these resourceful and valiant foes of Israel their first grip upon the people of the hills of Ephraim, was but the culmination of repeated attempts at conquest. Its result was not a formal subordination of one people to the other, but the maintenance by the Philistines of strongholds in the heart of the Israelitish country (10 : 5), and innumerable raids and acts of petty violence.

The Philistines, so far as can be determined, entered Canaan by way of the seacoast from the direction of Egypt not far from the time when Israel was invading the land from the east-Jordan territory. It is generally supposed that at the breaking up of the horde of "barbarians" from the north and west, which invaded Syria, Canaan and Egypt in the days of Merempthah and Ramses III, and which was by the latter decisively beaten and scattered, the Philistines were left stranded. They worked their way northward and settled on the coast west of the hills of Judah. Their interests became commercial; they sought to dominate Israel in order to keep unobstructed the caravan routes to the north and east. At a very early date their organization into five federated communities was complete. It proved to be effective, although not as much so as a kingdom with a ruler of the type of David. The Philistines developed more rapidly than the Israelites and thus became dominant in the days of Samson and Eli.

Samuel's Leadership.

To Samuel was due the credit of drawing together the disheartened Israelites and arousing their energy and ambition. How he achieved this result is not wholly clear. The chapters which tell the story (5 to 12) are based upon two traditions, not wholly homogeneous. The one which seems to be the older (9:1 to 10:16; 11:1-13) describes Samuel as the seer of Ramah, honored as God's "man," and widely influential, yet confronting (9:16) a deplorable political situation which demanded the strong hand of a military leader and the loyalty only to be evoked by a king (13:3, 17-23). The other (7; 8; 10:17-27; 12) describes Samuel as one who rallied all Israel, repentant and devoted, took the aggressive with success against the Philistines, and then ruled them in peace and with justice during a long life, yielding toward its close rather reluctantly to the demand for a king.

The exact harmonization of these traditions is not important. That they differ does not prove that either is without foundation. Each conveys the impression that Samuel's place among the Israelites—at least of the central tribes—had become influential in his later years. To him the people listened because they believed in him as a true representative of Jehovah's will. Whatever successes had been gained, however, under his leadership against the Philistines were but temporary. The logic of the situation in which the Israelites found themselves seemed to point toward the establishment of a kingdom. Samuel did not regard this solution as ideal; he did yield to it as a practical measure.

The Prophetic Order.

Samuel's influence was founded, no doubt, upon his noble personality. He was one of those men whom every one trusts and follows. Yet he may have made his influence felt far and wide through the prophets whose recognized head (19:20) he was. These "prophets" were religious devotees, who drew no line between con-

secration and patriotism, who would naturally believe that zeal for Jehovah meant efficiency against the Philistines. With such men as agents Samuel's influence among the people would not be slight. There is, to be sure, no positive proof that he made use of them; but the view that he organized, trained and directed them is at least plausible.

Saul's Real Patron.

To declare, however, that Samuel was the one who originated and directed the movement which resulted in the establishment of Saul upon the throne is to grossly misinterpret the author of 1 Samuel. Samuel, he makes it clear, was but an agent. Not only did he follow divine instructions (9:15, 16), but by the fulfilment of the predictions of Samuel (10:3-13), through the divinely guided lot (10:17-24), and by the opportunity given him to show to the people his powers of leadership, Saul was distinctly selected by God to be the king. As the spokesman of Jehovah Samuel was an important, even indispensable personality, but he was, after all, a lieutenant, although one rarely qualified for important achievement.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

Introductory.

This lesson gives the account of another of those points of departure which changed the whole history of Israel. It was another move in the process of deterioration, and yet another link in the long chain of events which culminated in the coming of Messiah.

After the account of a deliverance wrought by God under the dictatorship of Samuel, we have the story of the beginning of the period of the government by kings which ended so disastrously.

The Lust of the People.

The occasion arose in the corrupt practices of the sons of Samuel, a lamentable and distressing fact. The elders feeling, and very properly, that this must be dealt

with, came to Samuel and demanded a king. Here, as so often has been the case, an attempt is made to do a right thing in a wrong way. Abuses can never permanently be corrected by methods which are in themselves wrong. While this afforded the occasion for the request for a king, the underlying reason thereof was quite different. That was declared after Samuel has told them what a king would really mean, and they replied, "Nay, but we will have a king over us, that we may be like all the nations." In that sentence the truth is revealed. They wanted to be like others, while God had called them in order that they might be unlike others, so that others might become like them.

This has ever been the peculiar peril of the people of God, a desire for conformity to the ways of the world from which they have been called out. It is ever due to dimness of spiritual vision, consequent upon failure of faith. It is always easier to believe in the greatness and power of things seen than of things unseen. Israel failed to realize her deficiency. She thought she believed in God, but wanted some visible token and symbol of the Divine government. And why may not belief in God be aided by sight? Because anything intervening obscures the vision of faith. The world lives by sight. The people of God live by faith. When they become like the world in principle, they become like the world in practice.

The Answer of God.

The word of God to Samuel first clearly reveals His understanding of their action, "they have rejected Me." These people did not intend this, but directly man acts in disobedience, he himself does not understand the deepest meaning of his own action. When after long centuries God sent His King, the One for whom they should have waited, they rejected Him because they had already rejected God. Samuel acting under Divine instruction tells the people what a king will really mean. He will be one who will get instead of give. That is the whole

story. Any authority substituted for that of God despoils man rather than blesses. Yet in answer to their persistent clamor God gave them a king. He does not vacate the throne. That He has never done, nor can He. If they will have a king, He will appoint him.

The man He chose is one who exactly fills their material ideals. They have no royal house, so one of their own number must be selected. Saul was physically great, a living embodiment of all they were lusting for. When man wants something other than God, He gives them what they want, that their desire may work itself out along its own lines. If a man makes gold his god instead of God, in all probability he will get gold, until gold gets him and ruins him. If a man chooses the things seen, they will come to him and surround him, and at last blind him. Thus men and nations create their own destiny under the government of God.

Yet the man Saul must have his chance, and by solemn and gracious circumstances he is prepared for his work. The meeting with Samuel, the anointing with oil, and principally the new heart are all in his favor. He has an opportunity of exercising kingship so as to restore the people to loyalty to God. His place is a difficult one, but his equipment is sufficient. God never puts a man into trying circumstances without giving him all necessary equipment. Now Saul stands between the forces of mischief which clamored for him, and the powers of God which are given him. He must choose between them for his own making or unmaking.

Lesson 25. SAUL THE FIRST KING. His Unsatisfactory Reign. Scripture Section, 1 Sam. chs. 13-15

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

Saul's Kingly Qualities.

The men of Israel, moved by dearly purchased experience to realize that a working union of the tribesmen was essential to their safety and prosperity, gave to Saul a genuine welcome as their needed leader. Notwithstanding their unpreparedness for warfare with their hereditary foes they were willing to rally at his summons. Good leadership made them a match for their Philistine oppressors. Saul's energetic espousal of the cause of the Israelites at Jabesh and the signal victory which he gained over the Ammonites (1 Sam. 11) gave the people confidence in his ability and courage. Saul had many royal qualities. He had a commanding presence, a courage only equalled by his generosity, a promptness of decision and quickness of action which enabled him to achieve results. So good a judge of men as Samuel believed in him, loved him and strengthened his hands. Few rulers have begun more auspiciously.

The Reverse of the Portrait.

Saul was not without his reasons for anxiety. He began his reign on a small capital. The range of his authority was restricted. He had both to expel the Philistines and exclude the other foes of his people, and to extend his acknowledged sway over the south and north. Probably his kingdom was practically limited to the territory south of Esdrælon. Saul's ideas of royalty were limited. His palace was his ancestral homestead; his throne a seat under a convenient tree; his courtiers mainly his own retainers; his sceptre a spear. His armies were levied in times of need, and were reliable so long as he continued to be victorious. Saul was a soldier, but not a sovereign. The social or moral or religious upbuilding of his people he did not seem to con-

sider, but only their political fortunes and his own. This lack of statesmanship was accompanied by an absence of self-control, which often turned his courage into rashness and his decision into stubbornness. Such a personality might be useful in the days when hard knocks were frequent, but would be inadequate to the large needs of days of real reconstruction.

Saul's Achievements.

It is much in Saul's favor that he held the love of the majority of his subjects through all vicissitudes. No unimportant asset to him was his lovable, fine, heroic son, Jonathan, who possessed all his father's virtues without his faults. He must have saved Israel's fortunes more than once.

We do not know the conclusion of the war against the Philistines. Doubtless hostilities were more or less intermittent during the whole of Saul's reign. Meanwhile he won distinction for himself, and abundant spoil for his followers (2 Sam. 1:24) on the expedition against neighboring nations (1 Sam. 14:47, 48). It was the prestige thus acquired that made him in time the king of Israel. The bond which held the tribesmen together was, however, a personal one. Saul had little or no genius for organization, but he did prepare the way for the easy achievement by a competent successor of a truly united nation.

The Secret of His Failure.

Saul was clearly doomed to failure. He was a one-sided man, quite out of sympathy with the religious impulse of his day and hence certain to get at odds with Samuel and some of the foremost men of his day. He was short-sighted. Deeming the Gibeonites to constitute a menace to his plans of unification, he made way with them by force, thus violating the ancient pledge of security and making necessary an atonement of blood (2 Sam. 21:1-14) before the moral sense of Israel could be satisfied. He was self-centered, suspicious and vindictive, unreasonable in his demands, unrestrained in

his enmity. He allowed his inferior self to become his dominant self, and so could not develop into a ruler "after God's own heart." Had Saul been willing to make use of the political wisdom and religious and moral force available to his hand in his kingdom, he might have established a dynasty. He preferred to have his unrestricted will.

It is to be said for Saul that the historian did him scanty justice. He really did much for his people. He secured the allegiance of Judah, so long independent of the other tribes. He gave his people confidence in themselves. But he was unequal to the task which destiny had set for him, and it was, on the whole, far better for Israel that his successor was a man of opposite mould.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

Introductory.

Unsatisfactory indeed was the reign of Saul. So far as the people were concerned there seems to have been absolutely no gain. His victories were spasmodic and partial, all having to be won over again in subsequent years. His ability to govern his own people was a minus quantity. There were no internal reforms, and when the people sinned it was largely through his influence, and when they did heroic deeds it was without him, or in spite of him.

The general lesson of the reign is that disobedience to the will of God on the part of a nation is always followed by its own punishment. The principal considerations, however, of this lesson are personal, and will be gathered from a study of Saul. He was a dire and disastrous failure, a man starting with much in his favor, and ending in the most horrible ruin. His failure began at the beginning of his career as chosen king, and became more pronounced along the whole line until the tragic end.

The Failure of Saul.

This first manifested itself on the day of the public

choosing of the king, when Saul concealed himself, notwithstanding his knowledge of his election and private anointing by Samuel. There is a mock modesty which is sinful, a hesitancy which betrays the absence of responsiveness to the commands of God, a lack of confidence which disqualifies for leadership. No man has a right to shirk his duty from any cause whatsoever. Obedience must follow revelation.

The next evidence of failure chronicled is that of his offering of the sacrifices in self-dependence in the absence of Samuel. Here Saul goes to the other extreme, revealing a lack of judgment and impatience which led to his disregarding the commands of God. There can be no circumstances of sufficient urgency which warrant any man in disobedience to God. Notwithstanding the reproof of Samuel, Saul continued to disregard the word of Jehovah, and repeated his disobedience in the case of Agag and the Amalekite cattle, immediately following this blunder by the sin of lying and contemptible meanness in charging the blame upon others. Later his degeneracy was marked by the rash oath which imperiled the safety of the life of Jonathan. And, further, beyond the scope of the present lesson, yet so closely connected that it must be noticed, was his hatred and persecution of David, and finally the driveling appeal to a witch, and the desperate rush from life by practical suicide. These are glaring evidences of a failure that was constant. Through them we plainly see a man governed by the animal side of his being, gradually sinking lower and lower, making the most terrible wreckage of a great opportunity.

The Lesson Suggested.

A study of such a failure teaches us that advantages are not insurances of success. Everything seemed to be in his favor, and yet he disastrously failed. The value of privileges depends upon the use men make of them. Rightly employed, they bless. Misused, they sweep with the fury of an avalanche to destruction. To-day men

may have personal endowments, splendid family connections, the best of friends interested in them, and yet the only word to describe their lives is failure. Therefore it is important to learn the reasons of such failure, and to discover how they may be avoided and victory gained.

Saul failed because he was never in the deepest facts of his life loyal to the government of God. That hiding away was the first proof. This issued in his inability to appreciate the best friends of his life, who were invariably men who were loyal to God. It moreover issued in his inability to understand his own opportunity. To him a king was at most a warrior. He lacked altogether appreciation of the necessity for the shepherd work of all true kinghood, that of caring for his people. The kingdom was to him a means to an end, and that end self-aggrandizement.

Thus we learn that advantages and opportunities are only of value to men as their lives are God-centered. Whether it be king or priest, forgetfulness of God brings its own punishment. To such come the words "Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Remove the mitre, and take off the crown" (Ezek. 21:26). No authority or advantages bestowed can be used apart from Him. The kingdom to which He introduces men cannot be governed by men in rebellion against Him.

Lesson 26. REVIEW OF LESSONS 14-25

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

From Moses to Samuel.

The survey of a period, such as the studies of this second quarter have covered, from its close is especially salutary in that it enables the student to realize the slow but adequate progress for which Divine providence provides.

The period has stretched over several centuries—no time at all in the slow-moving Orient. It included changes of far-reaching importance to Israel and to the world. For the Israelites who left Egypt and rendezvoused at Kadesh there was a transference from one environment to another, which meant from one type of development to another, which meant from one set of ambitions to another. The wonderful fact is that this change did not become a revolution. It was not a total severance of the relations of the earlier life, but a reformulation of what was significant in those relations on broader and more permanent lines. It was necessarily a transitional age, destined merely to prepare the way for experiences yet more permanent and fundamental.

The Great Transition.

In the days of Moses the Israelites were in all essential respects a nomadic people. Even in Egypt they had lived as sojourners, yielding neither their clan organization, their habits of life, nor their religious traditions. Egypt never seemed to them a place of permanent abode. Their kindred were ever beckoning them away. When through the genius and wisdom of their noble leader, a true man of God, they gained their freedom, they dwelt for some time in the desert. But the meagre life of the desert could not satisfy a people with such a leader and such a history. From the outset they craved a settled home. They made the way to Canaan where they entered upon a new life. Canaan was a land

of agriculture as well as herding, of settled homes and family interests, of community life, of constant contact with well organized peoples against whose predatory attacks they had to maintain themselves.

The Significance of the New Order.

Politically this change was important. Clan or tribal relationship sinks all individuality and recognizes no allegiance beyond the clan. It is a primitive stage of social order, valuable for protection but forbidding true social development and exalting a blind fidelity to traditional experience. Israel was forced by bitter experience to break down the tribal banners and enter upon a union which should enable a king to deal with the affairs of the people as a working unity. Saul's reign was a transition from tribal independence to a true monarchy. Its collapse exhibited the essential weakness of the tribal theory and paved the way for a well-organized kingdom.

Socially the settlement in Canaan was important. It brought Israel into contact with a higher, better organized civilization with which it had to amalgamate. It was a joyous, friendly type of community life. Its opportunities for the acquisition of wealth through tillage of the soil and through trade operated powerfully to broaden Israelitish social traditions, and to substitute the community or city for the family or clan as the recognized social unit.

Religiously Canaan meant decadence from the Mosaic ideals, at least for a time. The people were tempted to adopt the gods of Canaan along with the land. In the end they remained loyal to Jehovah as their continuing source of blessing, but had adopted in His worship many of the more attractive elements of local religious practice. The patriarchal simplicity of worship, native to the desert, was replaced by a more elaborate cult, reflected, indeed, in the religious codes of Exodus 20 and 34, and on the whole a normal improvement.

The Dominant Personalities.

Several men stand out as leaders in this historical development. They would be conspicuous in any age. They knew their people, realized the actual conditions and supplied the needed impulse for an advance. Behind them were scores and hundreds of capable, self-sacrificing people. Joshua, Jonathan, Hannah, Gideon, Deborah, Aaron, Jethro and many others deserve honor. But there was need of such unusual men as Moses and Samuel to serve as God's pioneers in administration.

The Results.

The age was one of rich experience. It was a rude and crude yet growing age. Its emphasis was upon organization rather than revelation. The ideas of the people regarding Jehovah remained very primitive. They were readjusting themselves to their novel environment and reinterpreting their knowledge. They were gradually finding themselves, and thus preparing for a marked advance.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

Introductory.

The exercise of reviewing the lessons is a good one. A retrospective glance will emphasize truths imperfectly comprehended in their development. Completed, we look back over incidents "fitly framed together." Instead of parts, we have the whole. We see the Divine movement maintained with unfailing regularity, for notwithstanding human conditions and instrumentalities, the continuity of the purpose, plan and power of God sublimely come into vision.

A Retrospect From the Human Standpoint.

Glancing at the nation as a nation, we have seen it emerge from a mob of freshly freed slaves without a country, into a constituted monarchy settled in its own land. Its triumphs are without parallel. Yet there is hardly one picture of national greatness and heroism.

It is a long continued story of murmuring, idolatry, cowardice, and disobedience. The realization of their nationality is rather in spite of them, than through any excellencies within them. We look in vain for the explanation of success in the nation itself. It is a disappointing and provoking people—blind to the advantages of Divine government, and irresponsive to the ideals of Divine life.

From the rank and file, five names stand conspicuously out, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Samuel, and Saul. The first four were the men through whom the will of God was made known to the people. The principles of their greatness, in each case, were those of unswerving confidence in God, constant communion and loyal co-operation with Him. All they were by natural endowment counted, because used under His guidance. The last stands out as a contrast in each respect save that of natural endowment. Saul having all in his favor yet failed through lack of confidence, failure in communion, and refusal to co-operate with God. Talents without the power which God puts into consecrated life, are poor substitutes for the omnipotence which "can do all things." Hence Saul's life is an emphasis of the truth "Without me ye can do nothing."

A Retrospection from the Divine Standpoint.

Over all the human failure God is seen enthroned and acting in patience, in determination, and in order. His patience needs no proof. Through every disappointment and disaster which brought Israel to shame, the long-suffering patience of Jehovah is manifested. His determination is evidenced in every step of progress. He works and none can prevent. The supreme fact which arrests the attention is the wonderful order always manifest and always emerging out of the greatest disorder on the human side. Out of every fresh difficulty a link is forged in that great chain of events which grows steadily toward the consummation of all in the coming of Messiah. In every crisis the man is found

exactly fitted for the accomplishment of the special kind of work demanded. Moses for the people disorganized and needing law; Joshua for a people having to enter war; Gideon for a people defeated and distressed; Samuel for a people corrupted and verging on idolatry; Saul for a people clamoring for a king like their neighbors. There is no mistake at any point. The moment and the man arrive simultaneously, and through failure after failure the Divine purpose moves in power to consummation.

Conclusions.

It is this retrospect from the Divine standpoint which is of chief value. It gives us a picture of the one supreme and abiding fact in all human history, that of the overruling God. The facts in the history of the Hebrew people as set forth in Scripture, are repeated everywhere. Nations and ages affect not the Everlasting. No nation has come to greatness in benefiting the race in its own strength, or through the policy and scheming of its worldly-wise. Is not the story of every nation which has been great in the best history of the world that of remarkable development in spite of continuous blunders? To him who has eyes to see, God has raised up and led more nations than one, and through them accomplished far larger purposes than they knew or understood.

Those who have intelligently realized this, and yielded themselves to Him have been the men who have made true history, while those who have rejected His authority He has brought to naught.

There is no room for panic in the heart that knows God. He shall set judgment in the earth. Yet there should be perpetual anxiety as to personal relationship to His throne, and those men are the truest patriots who contribute to bring their nation into line with Divine government.

Lesson 27. DAVID'S EARLY LIFE. His Anointing, and his Victory over Goliath. Scripture Section, 1 Sam. chs. 16, 17

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

Samuel's Search for a New Leader.

The rupture between Samuel and Saul did not lead to any attempt on the part of the former to publicly subvert the royal authority of Saul. He withdrew to Ramah, his home, and there gave himself to the active superintendence of the prophetical community which seems to have become located there. But inasmuch as he no longer regarded Saul as a ruler whose dynasty Jehovah would sustain, he was awaiting the Divine direction for the discovery of another and truer national leader.

The Anointing of David.

In the simple language of the vivid Old Testament narratives we are straitly told that Jehovah directed him to look for the king-to-be at Bethlehem in the family of Jesse. This family was a well-known one in Judah. It is an evidence of the growing unity of the people under Saul that Samuel, the Ephraimite, could have even so much as thought of a ruler from the southern section. The narrative emphasizes the unobtrusiveness of Samuel's visit to Bethlehem, the complete confusion of his own untutored judgment, and the final selection of David. It is quite needless to assume that the significance of the act of anointing was plain to all who witnessed it. It was, of course, symbolic of David's selection for some task and of his consecration to it. To the family, even, it might have meant no more than the assertion of a claim to David by the prophet, on behalf of Jehovah to be fully executed later on. At all events he certainly returned to his customary pursuits, after having established a relationship with Samuel which began to mould his life. He was more than a

mere boy. His winning personality, his skill and courage and his varied gifts made him quickly a well-known personage. His opportunity for advancement came in good time.

Appointed to the Court.

Saul was beginning to show signs of mental depression, often developing into acute mania. He felt that God had turned against him. His peace of mind departed and he became really dangerous. His officers believed that his malady could be relieved or banished by music, and persuaded the king to send for David, whom they recommended as a soldier of repute, a man of affairs, attractive in person and a skilful musician. David at once won the royal favor, and was attached to Saul's person as his armor-bearer.

His Exploits Against the Philistines.

David found his next opportunity in the warfare which was being carried on against the Philistines. The exact facts in the case are obscured by the reduplication of accounts. 1 Sam. 17:1-11, followed by verses 32-54, relates the occasion of the duel with Goliath, as we would naturally suppose that it might have happened. As Saul's armor-bearer David accompanied him to the field, heard the champion's proud boast and asked permission to meet him. 1 Sam. 17:12-31, 55; 18:1-5 imply that David was a mere shepherd lad quite unknown to Saul. These evidently represent two distinct narratives of the introduction of David to popular notice and royal favor. They cannot be satisfactorily united. The author of the book of Samuel used both of them, not caring to choose between them. It is well for those of us who are troubled by this divergence of data to note carefully that the main facts are upheld by each narrative. The real point of each story was the same. David had a personality which made him the idol of the populace and the beloved friend of all who knew him without prejudice. He was young, brave, clever, strong and

resourceful. He could charm away melancholy; he could likewise lead a band of warriors to victory. Pre-eminent for social gifts, he was also a man of affairs who could be trusted. His power was made manifest by innumerable exploits against the Philistines, of which the encounter with Goliath was a representative one. 2 Sam. 21:19 ascribes the death of Goliath to Elhanan, the Bethlehemite, a puzzling datum, since there is no real warrant for adopting Sayce's declaration that Elhanan was the earlier name of David.

No story in the Old Testament can surpass the narrative of the victory won at the ravine between the two facing hill slopes. For topographical accuracy, naturalness, vigor, interest and instructiveness, it is pre-eminent. To Israel, after all, its greatest impress was the conviction that with Jehovah as their strength victory was assured. A stripling of Israel in a shepherd's coat and armed with a sling was more than a match for the mightiest of warriors, "for the battle is Jehovah's."

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

Introductory.

We are now entering on a new period in the history of Israel, one in which the essential truths concerning kingship are about to be revealed. As in the reign of Saul the false ideals of materialism were exposed, so now the true principles are to be exhibited, and consequent strength of the nation realized. Before this section is done with, we shall see human failure again manifested, but the Divine ideals will have been seen and embodied in the consciousness of the race as preparatory to the true kingdom and the coming King.

The One King—Jehovah.

The fundamental truth revealed in this lesson is the fact that no human failure finally frustrates Divine purposes. Saul has indeed failed, and with him the whole nation who clamored for a king. Samuel mourns this

failure, and God rebukes him. The human has failed, not the Divine. God knew where the king was to be found who should realize His purpose and so deliver the nation. The principle of selection is spiritual, not material. Jehovah looks at the heart, the inner and formative fact. As a man thinketh in his heart so is he. Not as he looks externally. The matter of importance is the governing principle, and to that God has respect. Yet the material is not despised. David was finely developed, healthy, and robust. Every material advantage is an advantage to a God-centred life. All God's kings are of the shepherd character. Leadership of the flock, defence against ravening wolves, provision of sustenance, these are the responsibilities of kingship, and the man who has learned the functions of the shepherd is prepared for the responsibilities of the kingly office.

The Chosen King—David.

This man's recognition of the Divine sovereignty and submission to it, is the secret of his fitness and service. In his subsequent history there will be many dark days, and sad reflections, yet through all he will never forget this kingship of Jehovah, and even when he sins against it, he will submit to the discipline in the spirit of true repentence. He was often disobedient, but the deep passion of his life was this submission, and in that he was a man after God's own heart. Hence the many excellencies which characterized the man. He was devoted to present duty, and his fidelity as a shepherd created the characteristic qualities of the true king. He was absolutely fearless in his confidence in God, and whether it was the bear or the lion in the wilderness, or the vaunting giant of the day of battle, nothing made his heart tremble; consciousness of right and of God sustained him.

And yet again his methods were those of sanctified common sense. No heavy and cumbrous armor which he had never used fascinated him, because other men

used such. He took and employed the weapons he understood, and thus gained his victory.

Deductions.

The rebuke of Samuel contains a lesson of great importance. We have no right to sit down and mourn human failures. Such a manifestation of grief indicates a false conception of the eternal purpose and power. We have no justification for investing the finite with an authority which belongs only to the Infinite. Hope will perish if we centre it in the human, and fail to remember that notwithstanding the passing of man, God endureth forever and ever.

"Who would sit down and sigh for a lost age of gold,
When the Lord of all ages is here?"

More concentration of thought upon the Almighty is the remedy for much of the disappointment of to-day.

The personal lesson is that the man who reckons with God is the man upon whom God can reckon. The deepest principle of life is the matter of supreme importance. Let that be right, and the final issue will be good even in spite of weakness and failure. God has a chance in and through the man who truly believes in Him. Confidence in Jehovah is never brought to shame. Its triumphs are as certain as the power in which it trusts, and as absolute as the will that determines the progress of events. Let this confidence possess us, and notwithstanding the discovery of our own weakness, the words of David will be our witness to others: "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass."

Lesson 28. DAVID'S FLIGHT FROM SAUL. Jonathan's Great Love for him. Scripture Section, 1 Sam. chs. 18-20

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

Saul's Growing Jealousy of David.

The war against the Philistines continued. It was more or less intermittent, but gave excuse at all times for acts of individual reprisal. Both at Saul's special bidding and on his own initiative David, having been made a captain, did such valiant and noteworthy deeds that the people with one accord gave him unstinted praise. Here arose Saul's supreme temptation. He could not endure the exaltation of another. The last and best proof of greatness was not for him. His anger and jealousy got the better of his love for David, and he began to plot the latter's destruction, first by exposing him to unusual risks at battle, then by inciting his own retainers to assassinate him, and finally by openly trying to kill him with his own hand.

Jonathan tried his best to reconcile the two, but only served to fix his father's fell purpose and to make himself a suspect. At the last David had no option before him. He had to leave the court, his home, and all who had come to love him, and flee for his life.

The Friendship of Jonathan.

He could scarcely have remained at the court so long, had it not been for the tender friendship of Jonathan, the king's son. Jonathan, as portrayed in these chapters, was a likeable, sincere, strong man, one whose close friendship was of real moment for David. They loved each other with the wholesome, generous affection which one man can show for another. It appears more nobly illustrated in the case of Jonathan, for he had more to lose by it. He was himself a hero, high-placed in the love of the people, heir-apparent to a kingdom; but no faintest suggestion of jealousy at David's success

and probable triumph ever passed his lips or even defiled his thought. He had a truly royal heart, which could rejoice in the recognition of the nobility and lovableness of David, thereby revealing his own great worth. Never had David a more devoted friend, one more thoroughly without selfishness in his relations with him. Jonathan's influence was potent in shaping David's life. His generous sympathy gave David protection. His last word to him (23 : 16-18) was one of encouragement, although it was at the same time a setting aside of his own ambitions.

The Covenant.

The loving union of David and Jonathan was sealed by a covenant which they "cut" together, probably a blood-covenant, further ratified by an exchange of clothing and of arms. In this act we have a Biblical example of a world-wide symbolic rite, by which two persons enter into "the closest, the most enduring and the most sacred of compacts, as friends and brothers, or as more than brothers, through the intercommingling of their blood by means of its mutual tasting or of its inter-transfusion." It symbolizes the commingling of the two lives; it forms an indissoluble union; it is the closest possible tie. Such a friend "sticketh closer than a brother."

Customs of Worship.

The narratives of these chapters include several references to the religious customs of the people that are instructive. From David's remark (20 : 6) we would infer that families held great sacrificial feasts each year at their homes, at which their scattered members were wont to present themselves. These were occasions of rejoicing and of worship.

The occasion of this unveiling of Saul's malignant purpose was the time of the new moon, when a feast was held at the court, which amounted to an act of worship. Every courtier was expected to be present or to

be accounted for. Since David was absent more than once, Saul's attention was aroused and his suspicion. The day of the new moon, according to Amos 8 : 5, was a day of abstinence from unnecessary labor, a sort of special Sabbath.

Every reader is surprised to note that Michal, the wife of David, had conveniently at hand an image of some sort, called a teraphim. The general opinion is that the teraphim was a sort of household deity, a relic perhaps of older ancestor worship, used for oracular purposes only, and not realized in the earlier and ruder days to be inconsistent with loyalty to Jehovah as the God of Israel. The one which Rachel (Gen. 31 : 34) stole away was of small size; Michal's was apparently of large size. A belief in their efficacy for determining individual fortunes was widespread (comp. Ezek. 21 : 21 or 2 Ki. 23 : 24). Their precise origin or character or form is as yet undetermined.

David's age was indeed a rude one. Saul's court was no school of refinement. Even the assembly of the prophets at Ramah was characterized by many practices which a later and more sensitive age rejected. It was an environment which made for initiative, resourcefulness, self-assertion and sturdy faith.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

Introductory.

Three men arrest our attention in this study—Saul, David, and Jonathan. Taking the larger outlook we see again the persistence and progress of the Divine purpose ever moving on, through failure and faithfulness of men toward the goal.

We cannot too frequently emphasize the necessity of this wider survey. It is full of interest and instructiveness, and must sustain in the heart of those confronted by difficulties and problems in their own age, unshaken confidence in the ultimate victory of God. Saul, David,

and Jonathan, however, stand out so conspicuously as to make this lesson pre-eminently a study in personality.

Saul.

There is in all Bible records no sadder picture of the ruins of a man than this of Saul. In all his relationships with David he is seen acting from a vicious motive, that of self-centred rebellion. He had sinned against light and opportunity, and the result had been that of his rejection. He was angry at the punishment, and his subsequent conduct is strongly marked by extravagant indiscretions. Here is seen the great contrast between this man and David, who in the time of his fall, which came later, humbled his heart before God in the day of his punishment. This self-centred anger of Saul manifested itself in the most terrible ways, hatred, deceit and attempted murder. All self-control lost, his reason positively tottered under the rush of passion. This failure of the reason was no excuse for crimes resulting, for it originated in sin.

What a solemn warning is afforded of the importance of guarding the heart against wrong motives! Self interest, jealousy, anger are dangerous powers to govern a life. Their measurements are false, and their conclusions are wrong. Such motives transmute love into hate, turn wisdom into madness, and impart impulses to the will with disastrous results. There is no ruin more appalling than that of the man swayed by evil passion. Intellect and heart lose their balance, and the finer qualities of the soul are consumed by the coarser forces dominating the life. The greater the man, the more terrible the ruin.

David.

These were days of trial and testing for David, and in them his strength is clearly manifested. Magnificent is the record of his conduct. It is thrice repeated that he behaved wisely, and that under adverse conditions: as Saul's servant, before the people, and with the Philistine princes. In every relationship he is seen as loyal

to God, and yet of simple and obedient heart. There is no dissimulation, no unseemly behavior. The life is radiant with integrity, and strong in the confidence of innocency.

The contrast is at once evident. This man is acting from a motive entirely different from that of Saul. It is that of a man submitted to God, and therefore able to work faithfully, and wait quietly through the most trying circumstances. Consciousness of that over-ruling gives consistency to life:—courage, hope, tranquillity. David is chosen by God, and although he knows this, he is as yet devoid of all arrogance, and fulfils his present duties, even at the risk of his life. When it was actually unsafe to remain longer in Saul's court, he made no attempt to stir up strife in the nation, but peacefully withdrew to Samuel.

It is ever the man who is in God's will that can afford to wait patiently. He is not dismayed nor distracted. His heart is at peace. Light shines upon his path. The Everlasting is his habitation. He will moreover be magnanimous in his treatment of his enemies. His strength draws its energy from God, and does not waste itself in revenge. And yet again such a man faithful in the small things, prepares himself for the greater which await him.

Jonathan.

Jonathan stands out as one of the most exquisite examples of true friendship in all literature. It is the friendship of pure affection and unswerving loyalty to God. This man knew that the choice of David by God meant his own exclusion from kingship, and in this he gladly acquiesced, risking his own life to save his friend.

Let us strive after such realization of friendship. It is only possible to love, which is conditioned in loyalty to God. Jonathan's resignation of the throne is proof of greatness equal to David's in accepting it. How beautiful and proper was David's love for this great soul as manifested in coming years!

Lesson 29. DAVID THE OUTLAW. His Courage and Generosity. Scripture Section, 1 Sam. chs. 21-27

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

David's Flight.

When finally convinced that in Saul's state of mind he was in constant peril, David left the court to take up the life of a wanderer in the fastnesses of Judea. The imminent danger is shown by the fact that he could secure neither food nor weapons. Coming on his way south to the sanctuary of Nob, not far from Jerusalem, David's needs were relieved by Ahimelech, the priest, who paid dearly, a little later, for his generosity. The surprise of Ahimelech at meeting David and the query regarding his lack of a retinue shows that David was a man of great importance who moved in state. David is not scrupulous in satisfying his need. He deceives the good priest and does not hesitate to take the consecrated "bread of the presence" which had just been replaced by fresh loaves and was still uneaten.

Ceremonial Cleanliness.

Ahimelech demurred at giving this holy bread to David, because he took it for granted that neither David nor his men had been made ceremonially fit. Apparently the stricter usage of the Levitical law which forbade any others than members of the priesthood to eat the stale loaves was not in force. David assured Ahimelech that he was on a secret expedition, and that both he and his men were always careful about ritual purity. The incident is made obscure by a very defective text. That David should even venture, however, to contravene sacred usage as he seemed to do is not readily explained. Only the extreme of bitter need could justify his action in the eyes of his contemporaries. The fact that Jewish opinion upheld him sup-

ports the appeal of Jesus, in his comment on the incident (Luke 6), to a law which is above conventions.

The Wilderness of Judah.

David fled to the country which "piles up" from the western shore of the Dead Sea to the very edge of the central plateau, to Jeshimon, the wilderness. George Adam Smith calls it "fifteen miles of chaos." Among those "tossed and broken, bare and silent hills," where the valleys are all alike, a game of hide-and-seek can be carried on for months. David had lived in boyhood at its very edge. From any hill near Bethlehem he could gaze across it to the Dead Sea. It was probably for him familiar ground, and at least it was a refuge near those upon whose general friendliness he could rely.

Here David roamed for some time, the captain of a band of men who came to number as many as six hundred. They were in part his kindred and in part men rendered desperate by the iniquitous conditions of social life in Israel. It was no easy task to maintain such a numerous body of men in a district so destitute of resources. The stories of the deliverance of Keilah (1 Sam. 23) and of the churlishness of Nabal (1 Sam. 25) will illustrate how he managed it. He guarded the interests of his countrymen, expressing that in return a gift would be made to him at suitable times of money or provisions. If he took booty in warfare with their enemies he was freehanded with it, making presents to the towns which had dealt generously with him.

This wilderness experience was not an unmixed evil for David. It gave him skill in the leadership of men and great resourcefulness. It exhibited his prowess so clearly that a sentiment began to be felt throughout the land that he was the coming leader of all Israel and the favored of Jehovah. It tested his character and revealed the generousness and sturdy self-reliance which justified the confidence of all.

The Flight to Achish.

Notwithstanding all this it is not strange that he wearied of these months of hiding. He determined to go to Achish, king of Gath, who would welcome such recruits as he could bring. Prevented by the natural jealousies of his own people from making David the captain of his body-guard, Achish was induced to appoint him governor of Ziklag, a town on the border of the desert. Here, according to the Chronicles (1 Chron. 12:1-22), he was reinforced by men who came from all parts of Israel. At Ziklag he pursued a wily policy. Pretending to attack the Judean clans he actually attacked the Amalekites and the peoples of Geshur and Gezer, slaughtering all without mercy. Thus he caused the Philistines to think that he had made any reconciliation with his people impossible, whereas he was helping the latter by exterminating their implacably hostile and continuously dangerous foes.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

Introductory.

In order to have an appreciation of this lesson it is necessary to keep in mind the terrible experience this period must have been to David. He was practically, as our title suggests, an outlaw, the subject of spying, treachery, and relentless hatred, cut off from the land and worship he loved, and, to use his own expression, "hunted like a partridge upon the mountains."

The circumstances were just such as test a man, and reveal all the facts concerning him. What is revealed is by no means the picture of a perfect man, for David practised deceit with Ahimelech, descended to the smallness of feigning madness with Achish, meditated brutal revenge on Nabal, and lied to Achish the king of Gath. But he is not to be finally judged by these failures. They must be considered in the light of circumstances in which he was placed. Far more manifest than his

failures are qualities of greatness which mark him out as fitted for all the future to which he was called in the order of Divine government. At these let us look, with their lessons for us.

His Influence.

A man's character is always best known through the influence he exerts, and what David was in his truest life is revealed in the influence he exerted on the men who gathered to him in those days of his trouble and exile. A more unlikely crowd it is almost impossible to imagine. The description of them is very striking: men in distress, men in debt, and men discontented; just the kind of men that are a nuisance to society, and the most hopeless to deal with. Yet these men became the mighty men of his kingdom. The undisciplined became disciplined, the cowardly became courageous, the unfit became fit. All this reveals the royalty of David's character, his ability for inspiring and leading men. In cave Adullam, because of what he was himself, he laid the true foundation of his coming kingdom. To know what he was, we have only to examine these men as they were when they went to him, and as to what they became afterwards.

The true estimate of a man's life is not to be made upon a superficial observation of his mistakes, but circumstances must be studied, together with his real attitude toward these mistakes, and the permanent influence of his character. It is this deeper study of David's life which reveals his strength and manhood.

His Generosity.

This perhaps is the most conspicuous revelation of the story, and consequently least need be said concerning it. His retirement to the wilderness, when he might almost certainly have stirred up a party in his favor by remaining, and his two refusals to rid himself of his enemy, reveal the greatness of the man. Great strength is never contentious.

His Caution.

His generosity did not make him foolhardy. While escaping from the kingdom, and refusing to stir up strife there, he yet welcomed to himself men who were desirous of casting in their lot with him, and trained them for coming emergencies. While twice sparing the life of Saul, he declined to put himself for one moment within his power. His confidence in God did not make him guilty of putting himself in the power of his enemy. He acted as a man who knows that one of God's greatest bestowments on man is sagacity and caution, and he must use these gifts as part of the Divine equipment for preservation.

His Humility.

In nothing does the greatness of David's character show itself more conspicuously than in his attitude of mind toward his own sins. This is manifested throughout his career. There is one remarkable instance of it here. When through the prudence of Abigail he is delivered from the sin contemplated toward Nabal, he freely confesses that the proposed action would have been blood-guiltiness. The man who confesses sin is ever a man after God's own heart.

Conclusion.

The one all-mastering principle is that of loyalty to God. Such submission makes men kingly, so that other lives are changed in contact. Such confidence enables men to be generous even to foes, and to wait for God. Such obedience maintains caution, as the exercise of a God-bestowed faculty. Such relationship enables a man to know and own his wrong.

It is an interesting study in the conflict between good and evil in a God-governed life. The good is seen ever strengthening, and becoming the dominant fact in the life.

Lesson 30. DAVID THE KING. Jerusalem Made the Capital. Scripture Section, 2 Sam. chs. 1-6

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

The Situation After Saul's Death.

When Saul and his sons had met their death at the hands of the Philistines on Mount Gilboa the unity of Israel seemed at an end. Judah welcomed David to Hebron, where he was anointed king over the southern tribesmen. The men of the north, however, remained faithful to the family of Saul, represented by one surviving legitimate son. His capital, for the sake of security, was fixed at the strong city of Mahanaim, east of the Jordan. Abner, Saul's cousin and the commander of the army, was the real ruler. He seems to have been able to hold his own against the Philistines, for he is described as ruling over Gilead, Jezreel (*i. e.*, the plain of Esdraelon), Ephraim and Benjamin. Possibly the Philistines contented themselves with a nominal suzereignty over the land of Israel. Beyond question they looked upon David at the first as a loyal and very convenient vassal king.

David Made King Over All Israel.

For seven years the two little kingdoms confronted each other. Hostilities developed which resulted quite uniformly to Judah's advantage. At last the skilful leadership of Abner was the sole reliance of the Northern Kingdom. He took advantage of this, was sharply rebuked by his sovereign, and in revenge became a traitor. While negotiating with David the terms of the union of the kingdoms, Abner fell a victim to a blood feud. His king did not long survive him, being murdered in cold blood by two of the captains. No real obstacle remaining to the consolidation of interests, David was anointed king over all Israel at Hebron.

War With the Philistines.

We cannot be certain that the Philistines had been unsuspicious of David all these years, but his coronation at Hebron made them aware that he was their enemy. They quickly assumed the offensive and invaded Judah. David, given no time to organize his forces, was compelled to retire to a stronghold which may have been the cave of Adullam. The details of the campaign we do not know. It abounded in gallant exploits like that of the Mighty Three (2 Sam. 23:13-17). When David had gathered his men he struck two decisive blows which brought about a complete deliverance from the Philistine overlordship and perhaps a reversal of their political relations.

His Policy as King.

David was free at last to reveal his qualities as a ruler of men. He quickly exhibited his genius by his selection of Jerusalem as the proper site of the capital city of his kingdom. It was neutral territory, a natural stronghold, midway between Hebron and Shechem, commanding the highways of commerce in all directions, a thoroughly suitable center. Jerusalem had been occupied and held by the Jebusites, who were so confident of its impregnability that they were hardly concerned to defend it. How David's men gained access cannot be determined, but the capture was beyond question a signal feat of arms.

David soon proceeded to organize his resources. It may have been at this time, prior to his career of conquest, that he ordered the taking of a census for military purposes (2 Sam. 24:9), having in mind a more complete and reliable military organization. In spite of vigorous opposition David carried this through. A pestilence broke out soon after which was popularly explained as a Divine retribution for the census, and David himself so understood it; but the enrolment must have made much more possible the career of conquest on which he now engaged. Organizing an army, the

nucleus of which was his own chosen and tried warriors, he crushed successively the Philistines, the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Edomites, and Aram. Thus he quickly made his own people dominant among its neighbors and created a consciousness of resourcefulness and power which made for nationality.

The Bringing Up of the Ark.

Into his capital, now made prominent as the home of a powerful king, David determined to bring the ark of Jehovah in order that Jerusalem might become the religious center of the nation. He had no idea of creating a single central sanctuary, for there were many sanctuaries at which the people worshiped freely. But the ark was the national symbol of Jehovah's presence, and its resting-place was to some degree a national religious center. With imposing ceremonies and great rejoicings it was transferred from the home of Abinadab, where it had remained ever since its restoration by the Philistine, first to the house of Obed-edom and then to Jerusalem. The whole nation joined in the sacred festival.

Thus king David came to his natural place. He was a born ruler. He was ruthless where force was required; he was gracious when favor was possible. Jebusites and Philistines vied in rendering him loyal service. His own men were his slaves. He worked for the future, organizing, centralizing, unifying, educating his people. He enabled them to realize their resourcefulness as a nation, and thus prepared them for a future.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

Introductory.

The story of David's coming into his kingdom is perfectly natural, and full of incident and dramatic interest. The human is manifested in the passions, intrigues, jealousies, and friendships of those introduced.

His coming to the throne resulted from a combination of ordinary human happenings. Yet the Divine overruling is still more wonderfully evident. These very human qualities are restrained, and compelled to act often in ways by no means intended by the human instruments, and always with singular appropriateness to the accomplishment of Divine purpose. The same is true of all history. Man works out his own destiny, while yet God over-rules for the accomplishment of His largest purpose.

In the present lesson David is the central figure. He is seen exactly as Paul describes him so long afterwards, "in his own generation serving the counsel of God" (Acts 13:36). By no means a perfect man, largely under the influence of fleshly passion, yet he recognized the Divine nature of his appointment, and yielding himself thereto, fulfilled the will of God in his office, and gradually came into harmony with the will of God in his own life. The evidences of this recognition of Jehovah are the most important notes in this lesson from which consequently our deductions are to be made.

David's Consciousness of a Divine Mission.

The fact of David's appreciation of the Divine purpose is declared in the words, "David perceived that Jehovah had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for his people Israel's sake" (5:12). That twofold consciousness, first of a God-given mission, and secondly of the larger meaning thereof, ever assures strength of the highest order. It delivers a man from fear and faltering, and makes him courageous. It builds its confidence upon Omnipotence, and through every experience anticipates triumph. At the same time it saves from arrogance and ambition, and mantles the soul with humility and meekness.

David's Dependence on God.

This sense of the Divine counsel is manifested in David's refusal in any way to be accomplice of, or ac-

cessory to, crime even when it appears as though it would help forward a Divine purpose. His attitude toward the man who announced the death of Saul, toward Joab for the murder of Abner, and toward the men who killed Ishbosheth, clearly declared his conviction that God required no wrong-doing to enable Him to work out His designs. A man yielded to the will of God never believes that the end justifies the means. The importance of this truth cannot be too strongly emphasized. There is no fellowship between tyranny and Divine justice. Once let force attempt to improve or hasten forward the purpose of God, and failure miserable and complete follows. God's will and God's way go together.

David Co-working with God.

This dependence upon God was not passive merely. It was positive and active. At the death of Saul, before going to Judah, and again when the Philistines were threatening, before taking steps he "inquired of Jehovah." To serve the will of God is not merely to act as an automaton, waiting for the compulsion of an external force. It is to remit everything to God for guidance, using the rational powers possessed, but always under His regulation. This active submission to God—co-working with Him—is of a far higher nature than passive resignation. It needs resolute cultivation, but it is invaluable.

David Recognizing God's Supremacy in the State.

The crowning evidence of David's recognition of the supremacy of God in all the matters of the kingdom is that of his bringing of the ark of God back into the center of the national life. Something like eighty years before this it had been brought to the house of Abinadab by the Philistines, and there it would seem to have remained. David recognizes that the central fact of the national life is spiritual, and in the midst of material prosperity he takes time, and creates public demonstra-

tion to bring the sacred ark, which is the symbol of their relationship to God, into the midst of the capital. There was a three months' delay, owing to the action of those who attempted to improve on God's plan for the conveyance of the ark. Eventually, though for the moment David was rebellious, the ark was brought in. Doubtless he learned by this that the arrangements of God must be carried out in small as well as greatest matters.

The study of such a life will create the desire in every heart to serve our own generation after the counsel of God. To do this we must know Him, trust Him, obey Him.

Lessou 31. DAVID'S OLD AGE. The Troubled Ending of a Great Career. Scripture Section, 2 Sam. 15:1—19:15

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

Israel's Outlook.

The successful completion of his campaigning left David the acknowledged master of his little world, the welcomed ally of the king of Tyre, and the respected foe of greater sovereigns. He had not made Israel a world power, but he had given the people a feeling of nationality, a sense of strength and outlook. How great that outlook was is an interesting question. The seventh chapter of 2 Samuel gives it expression from the standpoint of the age of the author. To him, however, the "earth" of vs. 23 was a far larger sphere than it could have been to the average Israelite of David's time. The Assyrian conquest of the eighth century immensely

broadened the horizon of those dwelling in Palestine. In David's time it was imagination-quickening to dominate from Dan to Beersheba, and the summit of ambition to be known and feared from the river Euphrates to the brook of Egypt. Had David done nothing more for his people, his reign would have been memorable because it caused his people not merely to become self-confident but influential.

The Tragedy of David's Life.

That so powerful a king should be tempted to personal indulgence at the expense of his subjects is not strange. Such deeds were hardly regarded as criminal when performed by those of exalted rank. In many a kingdom Uriah would have felt himself honored rather than outraged. Not so in Israel. David was himself afraid of the verdict of his people and could not escape the stern denunciation of the prophet Nathan. The moral sense of Israel exhibited his passion in all its guilt and shame, and did not hesitate to make the story of his later years point one long moral of the inevitable consequences of guilt.

The years which followed after David's moral downfall were years of disappointment, disturbance and disaster. We cannot determine how many there were. The writer was oblivious to all but the slow unfolding of the avenging sequence. David's son and heir with equal unrestraint dishonored David's own child. In consequence her brother had him murdered in cold blood, then went into exile. This son, being allowed in due time to return home, yet treated captiously, became a deliberate traitor and plotted to supplant his father on the throne. Acting secretly he gained many adherents and at last broke out in open rebellion. For one reason or another there was much disaffection in the land. So great was David's peril that he retreated to Mahanaim, an ancient and loyal stronghold. Apparently he was at first accompanied only by his mercenaries, who formed his bodyguard, but in time many of

his people exhibited their continuing loyalty and won him back his throne. His later life was greatly embittered, however, by these never-concluded results of his base self-indulgence.

His Personal Qualities.

The strong and weak side of David's personality these narratives exhibit about equally. David had a rare attractiveness, a charm which made strong men his slaves. Ittai, the captain from Gath, a mercenary, was as completely devoted to him as Joab, David's fellow-soldier. Hushai readily attempted, at the risk of his life, to foil the plans of Ahithophel, reputed to be the cleverest man in the kingdom. This lovableness was one of the strongest factors in David's success. Its effectiveness was increased by his genuine large-mindedness. He could spare an enemy, honor a foe, remember long a kindness, overlook an insult, treat generously a conquered people, see the significance of simple acts of fidelity. David was built upon a generous scale. He was truly one of history's great men.

He threw away many of the best results of these traits by occasionally manifesting pitiable weakness. His parental fondness caused him to overlook scandalous actions on the part of his children; his favoritism, as shown to individuals or to sections of his kingdom, created open dissension.

It is questionable whether David could have achieved what he did, had he not been a man of deep religious feeling. Its expression was not infrequently rude and sensuous, but none the less real and characteristic. His reply to Michal, when she taunted him for dancing like any common man before the ark, his penitence under the reproof of Nathan, his resignation when a fugitive from Absalom, his appeal that his people might not be made to suffer (2 Sam. 24:17) for his fault, his refusal to satisfy his burning thirst with the water which heroic devotion had hallowed—these were proofs of his

innate responsiveness to spiritual impressions. Idealized as he was by later ages, there was a real basis for ascribing to him the beginnings of Israel's religious strength.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

Introductory.

The shadows are very dark in this lesson. The picture of David's position is full of sadness,—the rebellion of Absalom, the disaffection of part of his people, the brutality of Shimei, the cunning of Ziba, and finally the tragic death of Absalom. It is impossible to contemplate David in the midst of all these circumstances without realizing how acutely and terribly he must have suffered. Yet on the other hand there are gleams of light that are very beautiful. The fidelity to him of some of his own, and their strength in the day of conflict must have been sources of strength to him amid the surging sorrows.

David Suffering for his Sins.

The values of the study are those of warning and revelation. The warning comes from the evident connection between these sorrows and the previous failures of David. The revelation is that of a great character in spite of failure, manifesting behavior in sorrow which tells of strength.

In all these terrible troubles we see the certain outworking of the wrongs of the past. David's shameful sin against Uriah and Bathsheba he had confessed and repented of. Nevertheless the judgment pronounced, that the sword should not depart from his house, is being carried out, and that in a way that touched him in the most sensitive place of his nature.

Moreover, his past action toward Absalom had been weak. He had allowed his affection to set aside judicial integrity. Absalom never ought to have been recalled after his previous sin. It is a hard lesson and yet one

that must be learned, that a passion for righteousness is of more importance than the call of any merely personal love. In all the agonizing experience of Absalom's rebellion, and his own consequent exclusion for a time from the kingdom, David was but reaping the harvest of his own weakness and folly. Thus are we warned that no matter how strong the character may be, or how in the general fact of a life loyalty to truth and goodness may prevail, any deflection from the clearly marked pathway of integrity must inevitably result in harvests of suffering.

David's Triumph Over his Sorrows.

Solemn as are these warnings, the revelation of the greatness of this man is most remarkable. Here, indeed, he is seen as the man after God's own heart. Stricken with sorrow, an exile from his city and throne, yet no word of resentment against God passes his lips. On the contrary, when he sends Zadok back with the ark into the city, he deliberately affirms his confidence that if it be the will of Jehovah, he will be brought back, and if not, then he says, "Let Him do to me as seemeth good unto Him."

This is a great triumph of faith, and reveals the deepest secret of David's greatness. His life was full of fault and failure, and yet deeper down than all was his belief in God, and his devotion to His will. Nothing manifests more sublimely the reality of soul greatness than to bow submissively under Divine chastisement. All sin is terrible, but the sin of sins is delight in sin, and rebellion against Divine government. Of this David was never guilty. He failed and fell, and yet when lowest, was always found penitent and submissive to the Divine dealing, whatever it might be. It is the man who can thus take hold of God, and find after all that his satisfaction is in what God does, even when it means his own suffering, which follows upon his sin, who is the man of strong character.

This is the secret of all the other manifestations of greatness which the lesson contains, his generosity toward the men who persecuted him in the hour of his darkness, and supremely that great wail of his broken heart over Absalom. This handsome son of his love was a terrible failure, who died in rebellion against him, after a life which seemed to be characterized by cunning, and violation of all the principles of righteousness, and yet over his death David poured forth a dirge. To know sin, and to hate it, this is perhaps more than anything else in the sinner which makes him a man after God's own heart.

Lesson 32. SOLOMON MADE KING. His Wisdom and Fame. Scripture Section, 1 Ki. chs. 1-4; Prov. ch. 10

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

The Last Days of David.

The remaining years of David's life were years of security and peace. All thought of rebellion had ceased within his kingdom or without. His domain, under normal circumstances, was certain to pass over intact to his successor. But the years of privation, strenuous exertion, and luxury had left their personal work upon the king. He was a mere wreck of his former self, enfeebled, almost exhausted. He withdrew from public view and abandoned all active participation in the duties of a sovereign. Surrounded as he was by faithful and capable retainers, there was little need of his interference or leadership. His will was dominant, his dynasty secure, his hopes assured.

The Question of a Successor.

It is not strange that Adonijah, his eldest surviving son, should have regarded himself as the probable successor of David. He was ambitious, clever, and attractive. Men like Joab and Abiathar, whose loyalty to David could hardly be questioned, despite their independence, felt that Adonijah was the natural choice of the nation, and gave him their support. He had also the support of the royal princes, of the Judean nobles, and of many of the officers of the army, and planned to unite them with others into a party which could act as a unit at the proper time. That the feast at En-rogel was for the purpose of preparing the way for an immediate seizure of the throne we may well doubt.

It boded ill, however, for a small but influential party at court which favored Solomon, the loved son of Bathsheba, a lad of great favor and promise. Not only their future but their lives depended on their success. Adonijah mistrusted and disliked them, and would have promptly relegated them to obscurity and perhaps to death. An action characteristically Oriental was promptly decided upon.

The Coronation of Solomon.

By a skilfully arranged repetition of announcement and appeal, the aged king was made to realize that his freedom of selection was being curtailed and measures taken to insure the succession of Adonijah to the throne. The news roused him to his old-time vigor of decision. He gave quick orders which insured the immediate coronation of Solomon as king, and his public and official recognition as the reigning sovereign.

The privileges of royalty were closely guarded in those days, partly because they were so simple. The use of a king's possessions (comp. 2 Sam. 16:22) was tantamount to laying a claim to his place. Adonijah's maintenance of a large retinue was suspicious; his desire to take Abishag to wife (1 Ki. 2:22) Solomon regarded

as directly treasonable. When Solomon was placed upon the king's own mule and taken in state to Gihon, it scarcely needed the act of anointing and the public proclamation to make his enthronement secure. Adonijah and his party so understood the situation, and hastened to disperse.

The Personality of Solomon.

The young king thus placed in a moment in a position of great power and responsibility did not act unworthily. He exhibited the generous magnanimity which had characterized his father, David. His brother and the friends who had supported him were pardoned until they manifested an inclination for intrigue, when they were immediately executed. He had the quickness of decision and the courage for resolute action which are essential traits of an Oriental sovereign. But above all he was notable for "wisdom," a term which embraced, in Hebrew parlance, both the inward qualities of insight, sagacity and cleverness, and its external manifestations in wise decisions of disputes, pithy formulations of truth and sentiment, and statements regarding the world (1 Ki. 4:33) of nature and life. For practical wisdom and for clever aphorisms alike his fame endured. The central and probably the earlier section of the book of Proverbs (10:1—22:16) may well have been the outcome of a habit of proverb-making, fostered by the king and possibly initiated in his day, but continued by the guilds of sages who did so much for the training of the Hebrews in practical philosophy. As the name and authority of David became associated with the psalms of every age, so Solomon's name was identified with the proverbs from every source, his exact relationship being undetermined.

Solomon had a noble personality with unmeasured possibilities, winning, gifted, self-reliant and commanding. He received at the outset of his long reign the undivided homage of his subjects. He captured not alone

their affection but their imagination. He satisfied their ideals.

The Organization of his Kingdom.

A certain disillusion took place; just when we cannot affirm, perhaps not until after many years of reigning. It came through the gradual manifestation of royal selfishness and extravagance.

One of his earliest tasks was the reorganization of his kingdom. The fourth chapter of 1 Kings recognizes the result of this action. The court was abundantly provided for, its needs for a month at a time being supplied by a district over which was a revenue of royal appointment.

The section of this chapter from verses 20 to 26 inclusive is a post-exilic addition, as evidenced by the Babylonian standpoint of verses 21 and 24, and the use of the term "Israel" in verses 20 and 25. That it was inserted is shown by the connection of verses 19 and 27. The impression conveyed, however, is correct. There was great peace and plenty and prosperity, at least in the early part of Solomon's reign.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

Introduction.

This lesson introduces us to the history of the reign of Solomon, at once the most brilliant and most sad of those of the Hebrew kings. In these first movements we have evident signs of the strength and the weakness of this remarkable son of David. Let us trace these for the sake of learning the lessons they suggest.

Solomon's Capacity as a Ruler.

His natural capacity for the exercise of kingship is remarkably manifest in the first actions of his reign. These are characterized by forbearance and severity. Notwithstanding all the splendid achievements of the reign of David, Solomon came to a kingdom in which

elements of discord and seeds of disaffection were palpably present. This was manifest by the action of Adonijah, and the defection of such men as Abiathar and Joab. Solomon's forbearance was manifested in his sparing of the life of his elder brother, and those also of Abiathar and Shimei. Such forbearance, however, was not a sign of weakness, for when Adonijah subsequently took advantage of his clemency in a way utterly unwarranted by all Eastern ideals he was immediately executed. Though Abiathar's life was spared, he was rejected from the priestly office, by abiding wherein he might have wrought such mischief. The moment Shimei broke the bounds of his parole, he paid the death penalty. Joab, moreover, upon whom Solomon evidently looked as the most dangerous man in his kingdom, was put to death. All this gives the picture of a singular strong man, *suaviter in modo, fortiter in re,* a man whose hand was iron, even though it wore the silken glove. For his day and generation these were the elements necessary for the government of a turbulent people.

Solomon's Culture and Learning.

Solomon was, moreover, a man of singular culture, being philosopher, poet, and student of natural history. Add to all this, that in these early days he was a man of true humility of spirit, desiring wisdom above all things. Crowning everything is the truth stated that "he loved Jehovah and walked in the statutes of David his father."

A combination of these elements in one person constitutes a most uncommon man, capable only of greatness in success or failure, according to the principles by which life shall be governed.

Solomon's Desire for Worldly Fame.

Yet these earliest facts reveal certain elements of weakness which became more and more apparent with the passing of the years. He was from the first actuated by a

desire to place his kingdom side by side in comparison and competition with other kingdoms that lay round about. This policy betrayed a singular absence of the consciousness of separation to which the Hebrew people were called, and consequently notwithstanding Solomon's early successes, and the material advantages which accrued, time proved the disastrous failure of such a course. His affinity with Pharoah, king of Egypt, and the marriage of his daughter was in itself entirely out of harmony with the original purpose of Jehovah. As this woman is not named afterward among those who caused him to go astray, in all probability she adopted the worship of Jehovah. His marriage with her, however, established a precedent, which in its outworking, brought centuries of trouble to the people of God.

Lessons.

The lessons are apparent and searching. The most splendid inheritance cannot make the man. Character may be affected by environment, but need not be. The quality which makes manhood conspicuous for righteousness draws its life from the strength that is not touched by things earthly. The characteristics which make a man great among his fellows may ensnare his soul, unless the governing principle of his life be right. There must be no deviation, the course must be straight.

And yet perhaps most solemn of all, a man may have the truest religious desire and devotion, but unless these are followed to their final conclusions, they may be submerged by the tides of natural inclination, and a dawning life full of promise pass into darkness and eclipse.

Solomon was born to wealth, culture, and religion; but there are no evidences that he was wholly and absolutely surrendered to the God whom he did most truly love. He is a glaring instance of the impossibility of serving God and Mammon. We learn from this

story how much success may be but the sowing of the seeds of a harvest of failure.

Lesson 33. SOLOMON'S GREATEST WORK. The Temple and its Furnishings. Scripture Section, 1 Kings chs. 5-8

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

The Beginning of the Temple.

No sooner was Solomon well established upon his throne and well organized in his kingdom than he began to plan a series of building enterprises in keeping with the wealth, strength and influence of the Israel of his day. Nurtured in the palace, not on the homestead or the battlefield, his ideas were such as Saul could never have conceived nor David have executed. They marked a radical departure from the old simplicity and democracy and embodied the love of display and the ideas of sovereignty which characterized and surrounded Oriental monarchies. Solomon was ambitious to be as imposing as these neighbor kings.

The chronicler (1 Chron. 22:2-4, 14-19; 28:11-19; 29:2-19) describes in detail both the unstinted provision of materials by David and his securing of generous gifts from the people. The writers of the prophetic histories give us to understand that David had anticipated the erection of the temple and mention the spoils of warfare which were dedicated (2 Sam. 8:6-12) by him to this service.

Before the temple could be erected, the foundations had to be prepared, since the original altar-space had been merely the partly flattened, shelving summit of the

isolated hill. By solid masonry and by huge arches the space was extended into an area large enough to give room for the temple, faced toward the east, and for the proper approaches.

The Real Builders.

The Israelites had not as yet developed skill in architecture. King Solomon invited to his aid his neighbor Hiram, king of Tyre, whose artificers in stone or gold were among the most notable of that age. Hiram himself achieved renown as the builder of temples. It is quite probable, therefore, that Solomon's temple was erected after Phoenician rather than Egyptian models. Its ideal appearance we can only conjecture, however, since the measurements preserved and the descriptions of details are equally applicable to a variety of architectural ideas.

Hiram was faithful to his bargain. He contributed steadily the materials and the skilled workmen, not alone for the temple but for the palace. Solomon paid him in abundant supplies of wheat and oil, an arrangement which must have been mutually satisfactory, in view of its long continuance, notwithstanding Hiram's disgust (1 Ki. 9:12) at the villages made over to him as a sort of bonus.

Solomon's Purpose.

We may be fairly sure that neither Solomon nor his generation realized the future dignity and real importance of the temple. It was more, to be sure, than a royal chapel, a building intended to suitably equip the palace grounds with a place of worship. It had a truly national significance from the beginning, a value as a rallying centre, which Jeroboam I (1 Ki. 12:26-29) dared not ignore. But its uniqueness, isolation and unquestionable supremacy were of gradual development. These were the results of the lavish expenditure and sedulous care on the part of Solomon, whose motives may have been various. Solomon does not impress the

student of Scripture as a man of religious temperament, but he had a keen sense for that which was appropriate. The eighth chapter of First Kings represents him as giving utterance at the dedication of the temple to the liveliest of hopes for his people in their service before Jehovah. He realized that the temple would have great value in unifying and tranquilizing his people.

The Significance of the Temple.

In itself the temple resembled many royal shrines. It surpassed them only in magnificence. Making all allowance for extravagance of tradition, it must have been a beautiful structure, far outstripping any shrine in Israel, and hence attracting quickly the respect and reverence of the average Israelite.

Standing, as it did, for the worship of Jehovah at the capital itself, it did much to strengthen and make permanent the ties between Jehovah and the nation as a whole. Falling heir to the reverence paid to the ark and its contents, it was a unifying factor in the development of a truly national spirit. Inasmuch, too, as it contained no image, but represented by its empty sanctuary a deity unrepresentable and unapproachable by ordinary men, it made for spirituality. Those who prayed to an unseen deity could not but look upon Him as apart from men.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

Introductory.

A man's greatest work is invariably connected with his best life. In the building of the temple we certainly have the greatest work of Solomon, and it is equally certain that he is seen at his best at this period. The underlying principle is neither personal nor political. It is religious. This religious conviction is, moreover, singularly clear and pure, and his words of dedication remain forever upon the pages of truth as embodying conceptions of God and man's relationship to Him

which are of perpetual application, and full of undying beauty. Yet even here are manifest also those elements of weakness which eventually wrought such sad havoc in his career. His inordinate love of luxury and magnificence are seen in the enormous amount he spent on the building of his own house. Two sets of forces are evidently present in his life, first, at this time, his belief and devotion to God, and also the desire of his own nature, refined and cultured, yet purely natural and selfish. Eventually one of these must dominate the other. Which shall it be? That is ever the question in such rare lives. The question will be answered in our next lesson. For the present we look at the man at his highest and best.

Solomon's Purpose in Building the Temple.

By the consecration of vast wealth, enormous labor, and by pressing into the work advantages accruing from friendship with neighboring nations, as well as by personal attention bestowed, Solomon evidenced his conviction that the strength of the nation depended upon its unceasing remembrance of the relationship to God.

This, moreover, he emphasized at a time of peculiar peril, because of great prosperity. It was in time of peril that the heart of the people most readily turned to God. Just now everything was quiet. There was no foe at the gates, and disaffection within was at least silenced. Right here then was the time for affirming the Divine, and Solomon gave himself to this. The action is one of greatest importance, and should be considered in relation to personal and national life. Wealth devoted to spiritual matters is not wasted. Time taken from the material is saved. Force consecrated to the strengthening of the sense of God in the life of a people is vital. In the day of prosperity let the temple be reared, and never allow the glare of worldly success to make the heart forget that a godless prosperity is disastrous adversity.

The high note of spirituality in the prayer is remark-

able. Solomon did not for one moment imagine that Jehovah was coming to dwell in the house made with hands. He clearly understood that the heaven of heavens could not contain Him. This temple was to be a place of revelation and meeting, made necessary by the limitations of a man, a perpetual reminder of the infinite truth, which under all circumstances, and in all places should serve as an aid to man in his approach to God. In the exercise of prayer and worship he did not think it necessary for men to be there in bodily presence. They were to look toward it as God would look toward it, and in that meeting of mind and will there would be meeting between God and man. Strange indeed is it that to-day, when neither at Jerusalem nor in any mountain set apart do men meet with God, there are still men who would attempt to limit our worship to time and places of human appointment. All that was suggested in the splendid symbolism of that temple of old has been wrought out in human history in the person and work of Jesus. God's look is ever toward the perfect Son of His love. Oh, my soul, art thou, too, looking to the peerless One, from sorrow, sin or suffering? Then thou hast found the place of worship, and thy prayer prevails. Because the provision is more perfect to-day, we should the more zealously guard it, and see to it that in every department of life there is the time and place and quality of worship.

Learn.

It is easy to remind men of God when adversity sweeps the path of life. But the greatest triumphs of faith may sometimes be accomplished under very different conditions. Prosperity too often forgets the cross, adversity never. The affirmation of God which corrects forgetfulness keeps alive the conviction that "in him we live and move and have our being."

Lesson 34. SOLOMON'S MAGNIFICENCE AND FOLLY. The Beginning of National Decay. Scripture Section, 1 Ki. chs. 9-11

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

Solomon's Greatness.

It is not strange that Solomon's head was turned and that he threw all his energies into the work of making a brave display of magnificence and forgot the needs of his people. He was placed by the very success of his great father in the front rank of the kings of petty states, and on terms of relationship with the sovereign of Egypt himself. Tyre was glad to render him brotherly service; the little principalities paid him homage; the queen of distant Sheba heard of his glory and wisdom and came to visit him. He fell under the spell of what we might call the "royal" habit, and used his great resources freely for the creation of a kingdom which should surpass those about him.

His Defensive Policy.

His most creditable achievement was the erection of a chain of fortresses which made the land secure from invasion under ordinary conditions. Solomon seemed to prefer defense to offense. He prevented war by making it unprofitable. Some take this preference of his as an indication of personal timidity, but it may just as well have been deliberate statesmanship. Opinions have always differed greatly regarding Solomon's motives. He may have undertaken his great enterprises, as Mathieson thinks, for the specific purpose of busying his people and thus preventing their jealous attacks upon each other. The unifying which David furthered by employing his fighting population in warlike adventures, Solomon stimulated in peaceful achievements. His mistake was not so much in forwarding these building operations as in making them so numerous. He

planned greater achievements than the nation's resources would warrant.

His Commercial Relations.

Solomon's enterprise led him to cultivate close relations with nations all about him. He was keen to notice the advantages that would come to his people and to his throne by the encouragement of trade. It was developed in all directions—with the Hittite tribes of the North Euphrates, with the Syrians, with Egypt, with the Mediterranean ports in Phoenician trading ships, and with the flourishing kingdom of Saba in central and Southern Arabia. This last mentioned kingdom has been revealed within the last few years as one of real strength and importance, at the very height, in Solomon's time, of its prosperity.

Solomon's policy, according to tradition, made Jerusalem the abode of wealth. Articles of beauty, convenience, entertainment, amusement and luxury were common enough. But a disastrous price was being paid for all these things.

The Evils of his Policy.

Solomon forgot that his subjects had to pay for the execution of his desires. They were driven almost into revolt. The incessant demands of building operations for large bodies of men compelled him to establish a levy which was not satisfied to have the forced labor of the foreign-born among the Israelites, but required his natural subjects by the thousands. In addition to the levy, all Israel was heavily taxed for the support of the projects under way. Discontent at this crushing burden and dissension because of a fancied partiality on the part of the king for his own tribes and section gave rise to a dangerous attitude of the people.

The Disruption.

So long as Solomon lived the feeling of discontent was unable to find open expression. He was acknowledged master of his own throne and people. Upon his

death, however, the long repressed sentiment of the northern tribes was given voice. When Rehoboam, his son, went to Shechem for the ceremony of coronation they presented, through their spokesman, Jeroboam, their reasonable grievances. Had the young prince taken wise counsel and granted some relaxation of their burdens, so strong was the spell of Solomon's magnificence and power that even the freedom-loving men of Israel would have proffered allegiance. But is was God's purpose, as voiced by His prophet Shemaiah (1 Ki. 12: 24) to bring about the disruption of the monarchy so carefully builded by David. Stung by Rehoboam's curt rejection of their requests, the northern tribes declared their independence and elected Jeroboam as their king.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

Introductory.

These chapters chronicle the story of the catastrophe. There is nothing more tragic and pathetic in the pages of literature than is the ruin of Solomon, and its influence upon the nation. The question of Solomon's ultimate salvation is not before us. It is never raised in Scripture, and all discussions concerning it are irrelevant and flavor of impertinence. No one has any right to pass judgment on any soul, for we cannot tell what passes between such and God.

Solomon's Degradation.

As to the realization of all the fair possibilities and promises of his young manhood, he was the most pitiable and yet contemptible failure. The elements of weakness to which reference was made in the previous lesson, gained complete ascendancy over him, and those of strength weakened, until the fresh beauty of the dawning became the lurid dusk of a tempest swept eventide. The ruin is appalling, encompassing the whole fact of his being and vocation. It was the wreckage of all his powers—physical, mental, spiritual and regal. An in-

cidental word reveals the fact of the first, "when Solomon was old"(1 Ki. 11:4). Old? How old was he? As to actual years, perhaps, not more than fifty, but old! No comment is necessary. The degradation of his mental power is evident in the gloomy hatred which attempted the murder of Jeroboam.

Probably the pessimism of Ecclesiastes is the revelation of the same degradation. The spiritual deflection is most sad. "His wives turned away his heart after other gods"; and this man, who in all sincerity and with deep spiritual insight prayed at the temple's dedication, yet turned to the polluted abominations of the heathen. The ruin of the kingdom is equally evident. Oppressed under the taxation necessary for the maintenance of the voluptuous manner of his life, and full of disaffection, it was ripe for revolt, and on the eve of break-up. Let us learn for our own warning how a life so magnificent at the beginning could have so disastrous an ending.

Yielding to Temptation.

Here, as always, the profoundest fact is that of the false action of the will. Two sets of forces appealed to him in the beginning, those of a passionate and voluptuous nature, and those of a deep religious desire and delight. To whichever he yielded, he would become servant, while the power of the other would weaken. He submitted to the former with the results seen. Oh, that every young man would face the issue in the light of this warning, and that of thousands of similar ones!

Spiritual and Moral Descent Easy.

Having made his choice the descent was easy and rapid. His accumulation of wealth gave him notoriety and pre-eminence among surrounding kings. What could be better? He utterly failed to detect the difference between popular notoriety and pure testimony. Yet the difference is radical. Is not this the crowning mistake of many? Then he could minister to that disastrous passion of his animal life, and create alliances

with these kings by marriage. What remarkable foresight! Nay, what abject blindness! Yet it is easy to deceive one's own heart, until we think we really desire good as we pursue evil.

Desire yielded to never becomes satisfied. The magnificence must be multiplied, the harem must be enlarged. Yes, actually at last, the gods must be more, and that is the climax of corruption, as it is the finality of folly.

The Pervasiveness of Bad Influence.

No man ruins himself alone. Ah, this is the terror of it. If by my sin I only blasted myself, it would be terrible, but there would be at least a suspicion of excuse. There is none such. Solomon sinning curses the kingdom. The higher the seat of the sinner the more terrible the issue of the sin. An angel falling draws after him a legion. A perfect man involves a race. A king blights all his kingdom; and every man, some other man, or perhaps, and worse, a woman, or some little children.

Conclusion.

The one superlative truth I would emphasize from the life of Solomon is that the man of superbest equipment is most in peril, and if he fails, he involves more. This dimmed noon, the prophecy of youth with the undying manhood.

Lesson 35. ELIJAH THE PROPHET OF FIRE. His Victory over Baalism in Israel. Scripture Section, 1 Ki. chs. 17, 18

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

The Two Israelitish Kingdoms.

The immediate result of the declaration of independence by the northern tribes was the creation of two petty, weak, and mutually opposing kingdoms in the domain ruled over without question by David and Solomon. Neither kingdom was measurably stronger than the nations which had been kept in subjection by David, so that neither retained without question the old time supremacy. Each had some advantage with respect to the other. The northern kingdom possessed the greater territory, the larger variety of resources and the more numerous population. Its subjects were typical men of Israel, in every respect the equals of their southern cousins. The southern kingdom was compact, unified, less exposed to hostile attack, more able to use its last atom of resource. The rival kingdoms stood, on the whole, on even terms. For the first half of the century ensuing, while still "finding themselves," they were more or less actively hostile, but then settled down to two centuries of alternate friendship or enmity, according to the disposition of their rulers. Stanley characterized this rivalry—akin to that of Athens and Sparta, —as not unwholesome. Its value may best be estimated by following the development of each nation separately.

The Reign of Jeroboam I.

The man whom the northern tribes elevated to the throne was possessed of sterling qualities. He had enterprise, courage, shrewdness and tact. His opportunity was in many ways unique. He was unimpeded by precedents. He had come into power on a moral issue, and had the hearty support of the prophetic party. Had he studied chiefly the welfare of the nation to which

he belonged, a united Israel might yet have been a reality. But mastered by pride and ambition he deliberately planned to make the disunion permanent. Not only did he establish as official centers of public worship the old sanctuaries at Bethel and Dan, and set up there attractive symbols of deity and appoint as priests any who could qualify, but he arranged for new and doubtless more convenient seasons for the great feasts, not coincident with those observed at Jerusalem. Thus, one by one, he sundered the ties that bound Israel together and encouraged a growing apart. Jeroboam's great drawback, however, was his lack of religiousness. He secularized his kingdom and thereby earned the doubtful dignity of being regarded as the initiator and supreme example of that career of selfish, strenuous wickedness which characterized the northern dynasties.

The Frequent Dynasties.

Jeroboam held his kingdom by the sword and by the sword his dynasty ended. Baasha, the third sovereign of Israel, was a sturdy and capable warrior, who sought to conquer Judah in King Asa's time and was removed from Judean territory only at the great cost of a purchased counter-attack by Benhadad of Syria. The relief thus brought to Asa by Benhadad was the occasion of much trouble to both the Israelitish kingdoms. It gave the Syrians an opportunity and an excuse for invasion which led to two centuries of aggression and conflict. Baasha's dynasty gave way in turn to the nominal one of Zimri, never established, but yielding in a week to that of Omri, the general of the army.

The Dynasty of Omri.

The reigns of Omri and his son, Ahab, were of significance to Israel. They were men of energy and resource. They achieved much for their people politically, but deadened them religiously. Omri's greatest title to fame was his choice of Samaria as a capital. For

ease of defense, beauty of situation and convenience, Samaria was unsurpassed. In other ways Omri was not as distinguished as Ahab. Micah 6 : 16 hints that both were responsible for religious laxity. As a warrior Omri met with humiliating defeat, later on made up for by Ahab. Both were farsighted enough to favor a policy of alliance with the surrounding peoples. Those negotiated with Tyre and Judah were cemented by intermarriage. The general idea behind this policy was, no doubt, a Palestinian coalition against encroaching Assyria.

This political policy carried with it a religious hospitality, which deeply offended the prophetic leaders and alarmed them. When Ahab married Jezebel courtesy dictated that she should be allowed to erect a temple to the Phoenician Baal in Samaria, and to maintain a retinue of priests and prophets of her own. Ahab was in name at least a worshiper of Jehovah, and so were his people, but insensibly the energetic queen and her myrmidons gained influence not only at the capital but throughout the land. The people were fast coming to place Jehovah and Baal side by side, giving equal reverence to each.

The Mission of Elijah.

At this crisis there appeared a great original, solitary, unapproachable, stern, Jehovah's champion. Elijah demonstrated three facts: (1) that the Phœnician Baal was unable to respond to the appeal of his followers; (2) that Jehovah could hear and answer prayer; and (3) that he was the real lord of the land of Israel. By his own stalwart faith and quickening enthusiasm he swept away the sophistries of those who would harmonize the two kinds of religion and made active the conscience of Israel. A dangerous crisis in the history of religion was successfully passed on that memorable day at Mount Carmel when Elijah made himself the champion of loyalty to Jehovah, and by his faith and courage overcame the hosts of Baal.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

Introductory.

We find ourselves in the darkest days of Irsael's history. The kingdom is under the sway of two singularly strong and equally bad personalities,—Ahab and Jezebel.

Elijah appears on the scene as suddenly as a flash of lightning and a peal of thunder. Who he was, and whence he came we hardly know. One of the most striking and forceful figures in the Old Testament, he flames before us in a few scenes of dramatic force and interest, and passes, leaving behind him a message and a ministry which have affected many subsequent ages almost more powerfully than they did his own. In the present lesson he comes as God's spokesman against the shameful and yet shameless devotion of the chosen people to the worship of Baal. He seems to grip the whole nation and shake it loose from its sin, at any rate for the moment, dealing out unpitying punishment to the prize instruments of the degradation.

Elijah and God.

(1) The deepest secret of his power is revealed in his own description of the position he occupied. "Jehovah . . . before whom I stand." It is a description peculiar to Elijah, and has a twofold significance. It first reveals his realization of responsibility. The supreme King is Jehovah. It is at His court that Elijah gives attendance. There he receives his orders, and from thence he comes forth to deliver his message and fulfil his mission. This therefore suggests also his consciousness of resource. We often speak to-day of the necessity for "a good backing." To stand before God is to have God as backing. A man conscious of this is superior to, and independent of all human recognition and patronage. And we are not surprised at the heroism which characterized his dealings with men when we see this relation to God.

(2) This position recognized produced its effect in his ready obedience. God sent him to exile and loneliness for a little and "he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith." God sent him to dependence upon a widow in human extremity, and "he arose and went to Zarephath." God sent him to publicity, and the rebuking of a king and nation, "and Elijah went to show himself unto Ahab." Quick obedience is ever the true sign of loyalty. Whether the position be hidden or manifest matters nothing. That it is God's choice is everything. Such obedience vindicates itself as it reveals the wisdom of God, and ever prepared for larger service. God proved at the brook and at Zarephath is the more easily trusted on Carmel.

(3) The quiet and constant dependence of this rough and rugged son of thunder is very beautiful. In the quietness of the chamber of death at Zarephath, and amid the tumult of the trial by fire he turns to the same God, and in each case the argument of his appeal is rather that of the vindication of the divine name and honor, than his own.

Elijah and Man.

(1) There is nothing finer in these old Hebrew chronicles than the picture of Elijah's attitude to Ahab. At the first meeting he assumes in the name of Jehovah authority over the forces which make the temporal success of the nation, and announces the withholding of the rain.

After three years they meet again. The angry king addresses the prophet as the troubler of Israel. In Elijah's reply there is a revelation of perpetual truth. True patriotism often is iconoclastic and revolutionary. Israel's sorest trouble was not the chastisement intended to restore her to Jehovah, but the apostasy which had made such visitation necessary. Elijah declared this to the king.

(2) There was no pity in the heart of this man for the priests whose influence had permeated all society.

In the days of Jehovah's vindication they must be utterly slain. There is much sentimental softness abroad to-day which excuses and spares evil things. Well might it be for us if there might be a revival of the loyalty that has no pity for the things which spoil. There have been tragic hours when priests have had to be slain and kings beheaded. If the methods of our warfare have changed, at least loyal souls should be as unsparing in their antagonism to evil as ever.

Conclusion.

In Elijah's mission is revealed a method of God worthy of careful note. In the national history Elijah poetically accomplished nothing, for the decline continued. Yet the message must be delivered for the strengthening of timid souls, the possible redemption of halting ones, and the leaving of no excuse to those who deliberately choose the evil rather than the good.

Lesson 36. ELIJAH THE MAN OF GOD. His Zeal and his Reward. Scripture Section, 1 Ki. chs. 19-21; 2 Ki. 1: 1—2 : 18

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

The Fury of Jezebel.

When Jezebel heard of the contest at Carmel and that her prophets had been ruthlessly put to death as imposters her rage knew no bounds. Undaunted by the sweeping victory that Elijah had won she determined to put him to death and gave public announcement of her purpose. It is not strange that even Elijah quailed before the angry queen. She was of royal stock and acted the queen all her life long to its bitter end. Her

royal husband, her sons, her subjects were equally but as clay in her hands. She was one of those masterful, indomitable, implacable, irresistible, unsexed women, who appear at long intervals and assume a place in history which is ineffaceable. Her hint was too sharp to be ignored, and the prophet, who had triumphed only the day before over hundreds, fled in haste from her reach.

Elijah's Flight to Horeb.

He went straight south to the edge of the desert at Beersheba. Finding a solitude he threw himself down exhausted and hence despairing. But God prompted him to continue his journey to the sacred mountain, Horeb, consecrated by the memories of Jehovah's watchful care for Israel. Here he felt himself to be in the very presence of Jehovah, and yielded himself to his tuition. It was while here that he learned to realize the manifestation of Divine power not alone in the rolling of the thunder, or the lightning's flash, or in other disturbances of nature's equilibrium, but in the whisperings, the gentle forces of life. He did not forget the lesson. He had felt himself deserted and dishonored, because his God-given victory had stopped neither the wrath of Jezebel nor her power. He realized that Jehovah would work in His own fashion and time, and that he must simply provide for the continuance of his work. He had not been set aside but only taught to wait. There were many reliable men in Israel who had not "bowed the knee," many who were his spiritual children who would loyally continue his mission and achieve success. He returned from Horeb another man.

Elijah's Further Work in Israel.

He was naturally a silent and solitary man, a man for an emergency rather than a steady leader of community or national life. For continuing his work he chose with enlightened judgment as a constant companion, the inheritor of his influence and the executor of his hopes, a young man of a far different temperament.

Elisha was in every way supplemental to his master. The latter was a stern ascetic of the desert, but Elisha loved to feast and chat and mingle with men and women at their homes. His cheerful presence was a benediction; Elijah's was a signal of judgment. Beneath Elisha's genial humor was, however, a tenacity and boldness and ability to achieve which amply justified a choice which must have puzzled many an honest and pious Israelite.

The training of Elisha was not the only interest of Elijah's latter days. It is probable that the judicial murder of Naboth that Ahab might have his garden for his own took place some years after Elijah's triumph at Carmel. The old prophet had been almost forgotten. The guilty king was vexed that he should appear only to reprove or denounce him. "Hast thou found me, O my enemy?" But before Elijah's calm, dispassionate declaration of his guilt, Ahab's conscience was roused and his repentance gained.

His Significance.

The stern old prophet, thoughtful always in his patriotism, did two supreme services to his nation. At a time of religious crisis, when allegiance to Jehovah was coming to mean nothing at all, he recalled Israel to a frank consideration of religious values and to a free choice of Jehovah as the rightful and only lord of land and people. At another time of moral crisis he asserted the supremacy of simple morality to which no one, not even a popular and powerful sovereign could be superior. He recalled the nation to its best self and fired it with fresh zeal. Faithfulness to Jehovah expressed by fidelity in moral issues was his inspiring motto. And while he may have felt that his hopes were far from fulfilment, we can see that they were abundantly justified.

His Mysterious Death.

His departure from life was mysterious, yet hardly more so than his life. He never acted like other men.

The good Obadiah spoke with assurance when he pleaded that he had not the courage to announce to the frenzied Ahab that Elijah was to be seen, since on returning he might not be able to find him at all. The "sons of the prophets" wished to search for their master diligently because it was no new experience to them for the spirit of Jehovah to snatch him away suddenly from their midst. The actual facts regarding his death we of to-day can hardly even conjecture. He departed in some fashion that was recognized by all, even by Elisha, as final.

His Later Fame.

Elijah was of a nature truly titanic, a forceful personality which overwhelmed his own generation and stirred the imaginations of the ages which followed. He forever remains the symbol of a needed reformation of the inspiriting value of one heroic soul, of the hope of an age which seems dispirited and almost defunct. In the past exile days when the corruption of the priesthood and rulers were bringing Jehovah's worship into contempt, it was an Elijah who was looked for to bring fathers and children into an old time loyalty to Israel's ideals. It was the spirit of Elijah which was incarnate in John the Baptist, his great-heartedness, his unyielding energy, his unswerving loyalty to his ideals. That such men are honored by being recognized as sharing in the spirit of the great prophet of Israel is a significant testimony to his greatness.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

Introductory.

There are some very tender and beautiful touches in the account of the final things in the career of Elijah. Following his great triumph and vindication on Carmel, came a period of very remarkable and yet natural reaction. This was followed by a time of seclusion during which, under circumstances of peculiar need, the prophet makes two appearances, the first to Ahab in the matter

of Naboth's vineyard, and then to Ahaziah pronouncing sentence of death. Beyond this we have the account of his passing. Perhaps the most important lessons are to be gathered from the period of reaction after Carmel.

Elijah's Panic and God's Care.

The contrast between the man standing to all appearance alone on Carmel, in majestic and magnificent heroism defying the corrupt court and the false priests, and the man fleeing filled with fear because of the threat of an angry woman, is most remarkable. Though remarkable it is yet perfectly natural, if we may judge from the oft repetition of such experiences in the lives of God's most honored servants. There can be no doubt that the tension of the experience on Carmel had been very great, and when the fire from heaven had fallen and the crowd had passed away, reaction was almost inevitable.

The main value at this point is the manifestation of the exquisite tenderness of God. Elijah under the juniper tree requesting that he may die is indeed a pathetic sight. Yet notice that the angel visitor has no word of reprimand, neither does he attempt anything in the form of spiritual instruction, but simply gives him something to eat and drink. It is a very beautiful revelation of what God would ever do for His servents under such circumstances. A man heroic under the strain and stress of work for the King breaks down, becomes filled with panic. The Divine method with such a man would be that of quiet ministry to his physical necessity, that he may be equipped anew for the conflict.

Elijah's Pessimism and God's Answer.

Refreshed and strengthened by the sustenance, he passed on to Horeb. Though the panic was passed, the pessimism was not. The man was laboring under a sense of failure. As he looked back upon his own zeal for God, and upon the disastrous result, as it seemed

to him, of his work, he imagined he alone was left loyal to God.

His mistake was twofold: First, he attempted the measure of his work by visible results, and secondly, he allowed his apparent failure to obscure his vision of the certain victory of God.

Again it is very beautiful to notice God's method with him. Calling him to stand upon the mountain, He gave a double revelation, first, of the forces which are not evidences of the Divine presence, and secondly, of the sure and certain proof of Himself. Not in the wind, not in the earthquake, not in the fire. Elijah's ministry had been largely of this description, but while it had its place, he had to learn that the greatest triumph of God could not be won by such methods.

Then there came the still small voice, and the marginal suggestions of the literal rendering is very beautiful, "The sound of a gentle stillness." It is by such manner and method that God wins His greatest victories. Truly in all ages "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation."

Lesson 37. ELISHA THE PEOPLE'S FRIEND. His Miracles of Kindness. Scripture Section, 2 Ki. 2: 19—4: 44

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

Elijah's Successor.

It is customary to belittle Elisha and his work in comparison with that of his great predecessor. A fair judgment in this respect is not to be reached by comparing their lives, for they were men of opposite mould, and fitted for differing careers. Elisha was glad to be known as one who had "poured water on the hands of Elijah"

(2 Ki. 3:11), yet he craved permission to be his especial heir, continuing in their fulness those qualities and that policy for which Elijah had been so well known. Neither Elisha's appeal nor his bearing when thrown upon his own resources indicated a lack of self-confidence. In his own way he took up in earnest the great cause of establishing the loyalty of Israel to Jehovah. The prophetic stories embodied in the books of Kings have Elijah as their hero. He set, so to speak, the prophetic standard by which all others, even Elisha, have ever been judged. Without belittling him, however, we may reasonably conclude that Elisha did a work no less notable and far more effective, without which, in fact, the work of Elijah would have become of no effect.

The Situation Elisha Confronted.

The death of Ahab created for Israel certain political as well as religious and social problems. He had been the ablest opponent of Syria when attacked, and her most reliable ally when they worked in harmony. He had foreseen the great danger which threatened the Palestinian states and had contributed with energy, skill and resources to the common defense. He had been an intelligent and popular sovereign, one who under right palace influences would have avoided all criticism. He failed to reach the most enduring and wise results because he lacked a certain firmness of will which would have made him independent, if necessary, of advice or criticism. His death left matters in doubtful condition. His sons were unequal to the responsibilities of government, and yielded to the influence of their mother. He had not put Elijah to death according to the wish of the queen, but he had continued to tolerate the worship of Baal in Israel. The problems which Elisha had to face were thus of real importance. There was needed in the nation a leadership which should take into consideration both religious and political ends, and seek to solve them in a way which would make for unity. The prophet became a willing aspirant for this leadership. His method

was eminently sane and effective. It was to manifest a real sympathy for the troubles of the common people, to live close to them, to become their acknowledged counselor and friend, and hence to gain a real leadership among them.

His Miracles.

No profound discussion of the miracles of Elisha is possible or profitable. We only know them at second or third hand, as told and retold by loving disciples. It is neither the power of God nor of man over nature that they reveal, but God's providence and loving kindness. Elisha seemed well fitted to bring home Jehovah as a reality, a being who deals with life as it is lived, to his people. We find him associating with his countrymen, not avoiding them. Their local troubles, whether these were a fountain of bitter water, or a poisoned feast, or a scanty meal, he set himself to remedying. He was famed for attributing all power even over the most ordinary actions to his God.

In the story of the woman of Shunem we have a characteristic and suggestive incident, full of deep and tender feeling. It portrays the noble lady, glad to show a gracious hospitality to the holy man of God for his own sake, yet making it unobtrusive and adjustable to the prophet's own mood. He desires to show her a favor, but she needs none of those usually coveted. Discovering her secret yearning, Elisha promises her a son, who is born and lives to become a lad. A sunstroke put an end to his life. She placed the body in the prophet's chamber, and hastened with all speed to Mt. Carmel, where apparently was Elisha's usual abode. Oblivious of aught else, she stayed not till she reached Elisha and clasped his feet in mute entreaty. Such bold conduct in a woman was unprecedented. She had had only indirect speech with him before. It betokened some great calamity, great enough to make her desperate. Her wail of despair gave the prophet a clue to her trouble. He ordered his servant to go with speed and place his staff

upon the face of the child. The mother, however, would not rely upon anything but his presence, so he followed on, recovered the lad, and give him to the humbly thankful mother.

Not only with the humble and with those of high standing did he deal. Kings often sought his aid. The story of the expedition against Moab illustrates the independence of the prophet. Elisha cared not for King Jehoram of Israel, but was willing to assist Jehoshaphat of Judah. He put himself into an ecstasy with music and then advised them what to do. The great success of that expedition, so overwhelming that the beleaguered king purchased safety at the price of the public sacrifice of his first-born son and heir to the throne, a deed which awed and shocked the allied forces so that they abandoned the expedition, is not attested by historical memoranda found elsewhere.

The Moabite Stone.

That Moab during this half century won her freedom, although at a costly price, is attested by the famous monument, preserved in fragments in the Louvre, called the Moabite stone, discovered by Klein, a German missionary, but eventually secured by a Frenchman. The rivalry to secure it made the poor natives think it valuable for amulet purposes, so they heated it and cracked it to bits with cold water. The Frenchman who was to blame spent a fortune in its reclamation and reproduction. It is the stele of victory erected by the king of Moab in his own capital after the land was once more his own.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

Introductory.

Elijah had told Elisha that in asking for a double portion of his spirit he had asked a hard thing. Yet according to the sign which Elijah had mentioned, there is no doubt that the blessing was granted. This fact at

once makes the story of Elisha the more remarkable, and gives us the teaching of principal value in this lesson. A comparison of the ministry of the two men reveals the most striking contrast. All the outstanding characteristics in the work of the former are conspicuous by their absence from that of the latter. The fire, passion, and sternness of Elijah we should have looked for in Elisha, from the fact that he possessed a "double portion" of his spirit. The term "double portion," however, does not indicate quantity, but rather the special gift of sonship, and suggests rather quality. Indeed, there is almost an utter absence of these qualities. The possibility of sternness and anger does not indeed manifest itself in his attitude toward Jehoram; but the general method and tone were of peace and beneficence rather than war, roughness and judgment. This contrast in spite of the reception of the "double portion" of the Spirit, is the ground work of our instruction.

Diverse Operations of the Spirit.

The enduement of the Spirit for service does not for a moment mean that the man receiving the blessing is to be thereby fitted for doing the same kind of work as another and in the same way. That the reception of the Spirit referred to was that of the Spirit of God is evident from this very contrast. If the reference were to the spirit of Elijah, then it must indicate a manifestation of his temper and tone, which is exactly what did not happen. The Spirit of Elijah's service and power was the Spirit of God, and the blessing asked and obtained was a son's portion of that Spirit. The natural fitness of each man was not interfered with or changed. It was rather energized and made forceful. The natural fire, force, and fervor of the man Elijah were made more hot and powerful and impassioned by the Spirit, while the quiet, peace-making qualities of Elisha were emphasized and made profitable for the accomplishing of the purposes of God. There is no lesson that we need to learn more to-day than this. We are so constantly

wanting the power of the Spirit to enable us to do something like some one else, whereas His presence and power are granted to enable us to fulfil our own mission, and do our own work. To the man of sternness He is a force of denunciation, stiffening the back and strengthening the courage for most daring denunciation of sin. To the man of peace and gentleness He is a veritable atmosphere of tenderness, rendering ever more compassionate the heart, and patient the life.

The Unifying Principles.

While these differences are as clearly marked, there are underlying identities which must be carefully noted. Each man recognized his relation to God. Each stood before God as His servant, waiting for His commands, and living only to carry them out. Each also on account of this consciousness, maintained an attitude of dignified authority toward those to whom they were sent. The enduement of the Spirit always gives this overwhelming consciousness of God, and responsibility to Him alone; and thus creates the strength of the message delivered, whether of justice or mercy, of anger or of compassion.

Learn.

That the bestowal of God's Spirit is not evidenced by reproduction of another's service. Magnificent diversity, and not uniformity of operation, is the method of the Spirit. Each worker's natural disposition, qualities, determine largely his service and the method of its discharge. So that lavishly endeavoring to do what others have accomplished is a hindrance to the performance of the work set before us. Admiration of some of God's mighty workers may, and should be, an inspiration to heroic effort, but mere imitation of such is responsible for the caricatures of the great that masquerade offensively in every walk of life.

The supreme aim of the servant of God should be self-abandonment to his Master. With such, and through such, omnipotence performs the miracles of conquest.

Lesson 38. ELISHA THE PUBLIC BENEFACTOR. His Aid against the Syrians. Scripture Section, 2 Ki. chs. 5-7, 13 : 14-21

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

The Length and Character of His Service.

The prophet Elisha lived a life noteworthy not alone for its unselfishness and gentle beneficence, but as well for its continuance of usefulness and its genuine rendering of national service. He outlived five kings of Israel and was sincerely mourned by the sixth, the youthful Jehoash (2 Ki. 13: 14-19) as the stanch champion of his country's interests, "the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof." How old the prophet was we cannot tell, but omitting any years which should be reckoned to King Ahab or to King Jehoash, he was pursuing his honored and honorable career for fifty-nine years, the combined reigns of Ahaziah, Jehoram, Jehu and Jehoahaz. These were on the whole years of political weakness, of occasional disaster and of continual apprehension, part of the time of Syria and always of the greater nation whose ambition to dominate the western Asiatic world was being made painfully apparent to the smaller nations which inhabited it. During all this time the active, alert prophet was in truth a mainstay of his people. Once when the Syrian king had found his most secret plans repeatedly foiled, he complained that there must be a traitor in his palace. His servants replied, "Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber." They were doubtless right, although Elisha's helpfulness implied no use of miraculous power but a cleverness, sagacity and insight which put to wise use the hints which a man as popular among the country people could readily pick up. So much was Elisha's aid depended upon, indeed, that when Samaria was so closely besieged by Benhadad that the capital became wholly destitute of food, the king—perhaps Jehoahaz—

laid the blame upon Elisha, who had remained in his house quiescent, and determined to have vengeance (2 Ki. 6:31, 32) upon him. Never had a prophet a more signal triumph than Elisha when, on the very next day, the spoils of the Syrian camp made food abundant and cheap in the market of Samaria.

The Assyrian Advance.

With Syria the struggle was not uneven. Under Jehoash, when the great prophet was about at the end of his life, Israel gained the upper hand, and under Jeroboam II., his son, there was never any question of rivalry, Israel being clearly dominant. Ahab's shrewdness in forgiving an earlier Benhadad and in retaining the Syrian Kingdom intact as a buffer-state between Israel and the advancing Assyrian became justified. Syria's subordination to Israel was due in the main to her repeated conflicts with Assyrian armies. In these wars she was usually aided by the kings of Israel. The records of Assyria mention Omri, Ahab and Jehu. The Assyrians were not invariably successful, but they never forgot a purpose or permanently yielded an advantage. For more than a generation approximating the reign of Jeroboam II. they ceased the resistless advance which had carried the empire's southern border on the coast to the very border of Syria, only to renew it and make great progress under Tiglath-pileser, the real conqueror of the Westland. The Assyrians were merciless opponents and shrewd fighters. They were ready for any manœuvre that promised victory: they were as ruthless as Romans in pursuing an advantage. Long before they actually threatened Israel itself, their prestige and progress caused grave apprehension to those who were responsible for the well-being of the nation.

The Great Revolution in Israel.

With the Assyrians Elisha had, so far as we know, little to do. In his day they were not the most dangerous foes of Israel but only enemies who needed watching. The prophet's resourcefulness centered upon the

immediate defense and the internal development of his country. He had never lost sight of the heritage of responsibility bequeathed to him by his great master. When he healed the captain of the host of Syria of his disease, it was in the name of Jehovah of Israel, "before whom" he "stood"; and the haughty noble by his entreaty for permission to take back with him some of the sacred soil that he might stand thereon while worshiping Jehovah, acknowledged that Jehovah of Israel was the only God worthy of worship.

But Elisha was not merely a consistent servant of Jehovah among the nations: he was unremitting in his support of Jehovah's supremacy over Israel. There yet remained many a worshiper of Baal in the land of Israel. Jezebel was still the queen, her power increased as queen-mother, her favorites apparently the men of power. But there was deep feeling among the people against her and the dynasty of Omri, which needed only a word from an approved source to kindle into a destructive fury.

Elisha had long bided his time. He had not concealed his dislike, even contempt, for the dynasty. He had not failed to do his duty by his country, but his loyalty was racial not personal. The opportunity came when Joram was in Jezreel, far from his army, and Ahaziah of Judah, his ally, by kinship, was with him. By a bold stroke the prophet swept away the whole connection of Baal-favoring kings. He anointed by his deputy the favorite captain of the army, Jehu, the son of Nimshi, a bold, merciless, ambitious warrior, who founded in resolute Oriental fashion a dynasty which maintained itself for a century upon the throne of Israel. Jehu made short work at the same time of the adherents and ministers and shrines of Baal. In this stern fashion was the prophetic purpose fulfilled.

What Was Established.

Two matters were definitely settled by these occurrences. One was the absolute acceptance by the nation

of its particular relationship to Jehovah and to no other deity. From the days of Elisha no Israelite ever doubted or denied it. The other was a belief in his power to determine Israel's circumstances for weal or woe. A blind confidence in his protection became the characteristic attitude of every Israelite.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

Introductory.

The words with which King Joash greeted Elisha are identical with those of Elisha's greeting to Elijah. In each case a prophet was near his passing; and in the first case his successor, and in the other the king of Israel recognized his true value to the nation. The perpetual weakness of the chosen people had been that of desiring conformity to the nations surrounding them. It had ever been difficult to lean wholly on the unseen arm of Jehovah, and resort had continually been taken to horses and chariots and alliances with the armies of aliens. Yet no real strength had ever come from such action. All the true victories had resulted from loyalty to the Divine intention and dependence upon the Divine strength. The prophets through much misunderstanding and often through suffering had persistently insisted upon this, and had done more for Israel than all her armies and alliances. This is the conviction which Elisha expressed at the passing of Elijah, and now Joash voices at his own passing, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof."

This is the deepest lesson of this study, that the man who stands amid the nation always uttering the Divine message and revealing the Divine purpose is the true patriot. Israel could far better do without her king, her alliances, her horses and chariots, than without such a man; and the nations of to-day whose greatness has come through the blessings of the Gospel of Christ can dispense with any class of man or agency rather than the

prophets who keep alive the testimony concerning essential things. The great events of this lesson all show Elisha bearing this kind of testimony, compelling the consciousness of the Divine over-ruling in the minds of men; and thus recalling the true meaning of their existence among the nations.

Naaman.

While individual truths of great importance might be considered in connection with this story, it is better for us to watch Elisha as he stands for the vindication of the deepest values. The king of Israel sees in the coming of Naaman an attempt on the part of the king of Syria to create a quarrel. Elisha finds an occasion for manifesting the power of the prophetic office, and so demonstrating the existence of the supreme King Jehovah. With quiet dignity and courtesy he lays upon the leper conditions which tax his pride, and call forth the principles of faith and obedience. When at last he obeys, his confession is of the supremacy of the God of Israel, and thus Elisha's purpose is gained. The blessing bestowed, patronage and gifts are declined by the prophet, thus revealing Jehovah's readiness to bestow, and His independence of all human patronage. This is statesmanship of the highest character.

The Bands of Syria.

In days when the king of Syria was warring against Israel, Elisha acting in harmony with God was able to thwart his purposes, until at length to all human appearances, Elisha himself was hemmed in at Dothan. On that occasion there was revealed to the fearful servant a glimpse of those legions who surround this prophet of God. It was a great vision, perpetually visible to those who like the prophet are carrying out the purpose of God.

> "Lo, to faith's enlightened sight
> All the mountain flamed with light.
> Hell is nigh, but God is nigher,
> Circling us with hosts of fire."

Through supernatural intervention the prophet was delivered, and the enemies were led to Samaria. Then, again, but on a new side, the prophet revealed God. These men were spared with a consideration which must have surprised them, and we are not surprised to read the "band of Syria came no more into the land of Israel." Thus Elisha was indeed "the chariots and horsemen of Israel," delivering with a might and majesty impossible to any earthly power.

The Siege of Samaria.

Again in the day of calamity and famine, when the King of Israel is utterly at a loss, and horses and chariots are of no avail, the prophet predicts deliverance, which comes without human aid, and in vindication of the word and power of Jehovah.

Conclusion.

To serve God is the highest service any one can give to the nation. The men who insist upon Divine government, and confer the Divine benefits, are those who most truly deserve the crown of patriots.

Lesson 39. REVIEW OF LESSONS 27-38

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

The Kingdom's Growth. Its Necessity and Significance.

By these lessons we have come at last to the time when a fair realization can be gained of the important part which the kingdom played in the preparation of Israel for her work for the world. It meant much to the nation, creating it to begin with, since no real nationalization was feasible until the closer unity of the kingdom was felt. It had great value as a political expedient. The problem which confronted the tribes of Israel was

not greatly dissimilar to that which the thirteen original states in America faced. Each tribe found it hard to yield its individuality, but was taught by bitter experience that to be the helpless prey of every outside foe was far worse than to enjoy a nominal freedom, which in fact was limited in many ways. The result of a union was a decided enlargement of opportunity. The kingdom was an improvement socially, as a matter of course, for it broadened the horizon of every family, every community, every clan. Its greatest effect was religious. For religious thinking the national point of view was all-important. The simplicity of the days of Samuel and Saul gave way not merely to a stately, regular impressive ritual service at the public sanctuaries, maintained by a regular priesthood, whose prestige and influence made them the peers of any in the land, but to a conception of Jehovah in His relations to Israel and to mankind which would have been impossible to those of the crude and narrow days of the judges. The sense of God grew with the national experience, especially with its conception of the world.

The Men who Brought It About.

We have been studying the truly great men who were God's instrumentalities in this development. Never was His method of promoting progress more clearly illustrated. These men were not perfect men: they did not need to be such. Their function was leadership, and leadership implies a close human sympathy with those who are to be led. Each one contributed his share, but it was only a share. Saul with his magnificent physique, dashing courage and imperious manner was near enough the king to satisfy the aspiration of his people for a while. He aroused their energies and let them feel a sense of power, but David with his lovableness, his heroic qualities, his fairness and large-mindedness, sustained and directed by his truly royal conception of how a kingdom should be organized and to what it should attain, really laid the enduring foundations of the mon-

archy and gave the people a sense of its significance. Under him Israel began to "find herself," to realize her place and power, and to dream of the future. Solomon made the most of the nation's resources, seeking to bring it into touch with other nations in policy, in display and in fame. He overestimated the resources of his people, no longer made rich by the spoils of constant and successful warfare, but he prevented the nation from going backward by registering its advance in monuments of marble, bronze and cedar. The Israel of Jeroboam, Omri, Ahab and Jehu was a smaller nation, but a resourceful and reflective one, learning the world, meeting the shock of aggressive nationality, discovering true values and declaring them through prophetic word and through national act, being often taught, to be sure, by bitter experience, but growing into a fuller appreciation of the best and highest.

Its Achievements.

Politically Israel never was more than relatively important. As a nation it grew because the great sovereign peoples of Egypt and Assyria were prevented by local dissensions and dangers from aggressiveness abroad. When Assyria got ready to attack Palestine, there was no power able to prevent her from carrying out her purpose.

Socially during these three centuries the people made great advances, far beyond the clan stage of organization with which they started. Individualism gained recognition, property rights were guarded, the authority of the king made laws for every one. Wealth accrued; capable men were able to win the fitting reward of their enterprises.

Religiously the greatest revolution took place. The Israel of Samuel and Saul was a devout but simple, pastoral people whose general conception of Jehovah was that of a protector and benefactor who was especially interested in them. Under David's tuition they began to realize his wider purpose and power. The later

experiences gave them yet broader ideas of the world about them and correspondingly enlarged their conception of what Jehovah must be to cope with it. The nation's loyalty to Jehovah after the leadership of Elijah and Elisha never swerved. His superiority they accepted without reserve. His genuine character and true relationship with men they had yet to fully discover. For this last advance Israel was now prepared.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

The lessons of this quarter have gathered around four of the most remarkable names in Hebrew history, and cover its most splendid period. Under David the kingdom was consolidated and its capital established. Solomon erected the temple which symbolized the religious nature of the people. After a period of declension Elijah, the rugged messenger of truth, recalled the nation to the one and only worship, while the more gentle Elisha kept alive in the heart of the chosen people, and in the consciousness of the surrounding nations the fact of the supremacy and active government of God.

To review this period from the standpoint of the human is to be inexpressibly saddened. So far as human realization of Divine purpose is concerned, there seems to be one long dreary succession of failure. The very national successes are so inter-penetrated with elements of evil that the ultimate break-up and failure is certain. The sins and follies of David had sown deeds of dissension which would bear a terrible harvest in future generations. The luxurious splendor of the court of Solomon, for the moment attracting attention, yet made inevitable the corruption that followed. The fiery fervor of Elijah only caused a temporary check to the abominations of idolatry, and the undying words of Elisha to Joash reveal his sense of the weakness of purpose in the king of Israel, and of the subsequent defeat of the people in years to come.

It has ever been thus in human history. No fact is more evident than that of man's perpetual failure to realize his opportunity. The widest outlook on history, whether we call it sacred or profane, reveals the truth that the upward movement which is clearly apparent has not been of man, but in spite of him. Surely the race is a love-encircled one, and the voice of God is ever heard crying not to Israel only, "How shall I let thee go?"

The only true view in these lessons is that of the Divine government and activity. Mount that height and take observations, and there is no room for sadness, for in spite of failure, God is seen moving on toward the great Messianic consummation, incorporating in the consciousness of the people some new lessons never to be unlearned, and destined to carry out the fullest purposes of His untiring love.

In many a dream the men of the past had seen a city and sought it. Jerusalem became the imperfect realization, and even to-day men speak the name with tenderness, their hearts thinking of another city yet to come in which the true possibilities of human life shall be realized. For high ideals the world owes more to old Jerusalem despite her tragic end, than to Rome, or London, or New York. Her temple has established forever the truth that the real center of national greatness is the recognition of God. Whether by glory, or destruction, or restoration, or neglect, that temple was the revelation of the nation's condition. The history of the temple is the history of the nation, and with its passing there passed the people as a national force. The lesson abides, that "happy is the people whose God is the Lord."

Gradually, moreover, the lesson of the supernatural and direct government of God for which Elisha stood is emerging from the underlying consciousness of man into the clear light of day.

Thus God is seen choosing men fitted to the times

for the accomplishment of work, the full value of which the rolling centuries alone declare. Let us take heart, knowing that perhaps the deepest meaning of what we do to-day will only be known and felt in the distant future. For us it is enough that we have worked with Him. He works, moreover, in spite of all our failures, and though all around may often look dark, the light of His government is diffused through all, and one day will overcome. Then will be the clear shining of the undying noon.

Lesson 40. ASA AND THE FIRST REFORMATION IN JUDAH. Solomon's Policy Reversed. Scripture Section, 2 Chron. chs. 14-16

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

Two Views of Asa.

That Asa was a great and good king, the first one to realize with some closeness the ideals of his race, is perfectly evident to one who reads with care the Biblical material concerning him. That he was far from being perfect, either in wisdom or in piety, is, alas! evident. The author of Kings and the Chronicles alike recognized his determination to bring about a sweeping reform in the Jewish state. The former admits that it was not complete; the latter does not give the reader this impression as a whole, yet virtually acknowledges it in 15:16. It was much more difficult for the Chronicler to emphasize the failure to do away with high places since many generations before his day they had become a symbol of utter corruption. The two accounts of Asa's career, taken together, give us, however, a fairly clear notion of his purposes, power and prestige.

Asa's Inheritance.

Asa, the third king of Judah, was the great grandson of Solomon. His very long reign, of more than forty years, was marked with great prosperity. The great problem which faced him as a sovereign was the maintenance of national faithfulness to Jehovah. Rehoboam and Abijam had both followed in the footsteps of Solomon in permitting a religious hospitality which amounted to unrestrained idolatry. The effects of this in the compact little Judean state became very deplorable. Court and people together were full of corruption. It speaks well for Asa that he had the courage to accept

the responsibility which he could not fail to see, of reversing the traditions of a quarter of a century. How he came to differ so sharply from his predecessors we are not told. Perhaps it was a national and obvious reaction of a noble mind, not unacquainted with the Davidic ideals. Asa had an advantage in the smallness of his territory. If the king could dominate the capital, he controlled the state of Judah. This fact explains his unprecedented act of discipline with reference to the queen-mother. Apparently she would not yield to the royal will, and forced Asa, in order to achieve success in his reform movement, to strip her of all her power. It manifested in the clearest fashion his determination.

His Religious Policy.

Asa's vigorous efforts for reform are described in much the same way in each of our authorities. The idols and abominable symbols of nature worship were put away. The worship of Jehovah was renewed in proper fashion. The people were gathered together in a great assembly to acknowledge the covenant of the nation with Jehovah. The purified temple was enriched by many gifts and made increasingly dear to the people. In short Asa took the ordinary methods which a vigorous and clear-headed purpose of reform would dictate. That he did not remove the high places is no ground for reproach as a closer study of the facts of Hebrew religious development shows us. It would never have occurred to a good man of his day that worship in high places, that is to say at village altars, was other than commendable. It was long after Asa's day that the necessity was perceived and acted upon of forbidding worship at these shrines, and authorizing only that at the temple in Jerusalem. This did not happen until these shrines had become practically given up to corrupt and licentious forms of worship. In Asa's day they merely reduplicated the usefulness of the temple. Asa formulated and executed a sound religious policy

which emphasized the true ideals of the Jewish state. According to the Chronicler, his long reign was promotion of much prosperity. He built up the nation on every side.

His Political Reverses.

Notwithstanding what the Chronicler reports about Asa's successful defense of his country against Zerah the Ethiopian, he cannot be called a warrior king. The Chronicler, in fact, describes that battle as one which was fought by Jehovah, the men of Judah having little to do but to pick up spoil. Asa's military methods are revealed to little advantage by his dispute with Baasha over boundary lines. Baasha, an aggressive warrior, had seized and fortified Ramah, thus controlling the most important approach of the Southern Kingdom, and threatening the very capital itself. Feeling helpless, Asa sent a huge bribe to Benhadad of Syria, requesting his intervention, a proposition only too gladly accepted by that sagacious king, for it gave by invitation a right to interfere in the affairs of the Hebrew States. It was a capital error. A long series of calamities followed in its wake. Hanani, the seer, well said, "Herein thou hast done foolishly, for from henceforth thou shall have wars."

Apparently the king realized that this criticism was just, and that his act had dimmed the lustre of an otherwise noble reign, for the Chronicler leaves the impression that his closing years were tinged with bitterness.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

Introductory.

Our lessons now lead us into the midst of troublous times in the history of Israel. The whole nation is reaping the harvest of the sowing of Solomon. Instead of being separate from surrounding nations, and consequently witnessing to them in united strength, the peo-

ple are suffering from false alliances and inability to influence others, while they themselves are divided.

At intervals there arose kings having the vision of the ideal who set themselves in greater or less degree to its restoration. Of these Asa was the first. This particular lesson is a two edged sword, showing in the case of Asa the strength of the man who puts his trust wholly in God, and the weakness of the same man when his faith falters. It is not so much a picture of individual life as of the influence of an appointed leader on the nation. At these two sides let us look.

Victory by Faith.

1. Purity. The reform of Asa is most evidently based upon his understanding of the purpose of God, and belief therein. Recognizing this underlying impulse, we notice that his first work was that of the correction of abuses. He did not commence to rearrange relations with surrounding kings. His first act was readjustment of the nation's relation to God. Foreign altars, high places, pillars and Asherim were swept out of the land. The teaching is evident that the matter of vital importance in individual and national life is religion, and anything affecting its reality must be ruthlessly swept aside.

2. Peace. The immediate result of such action was the establishment of peace within the borders, for "Jehovah had given him rest." Following upon such rest came the building of cities, and the prosecution of such activity as ministered to the true strength of the people. We have yet to see the nation who will dare to venture on this policy of purity as the condition of peace. If the revelation of Scripture is worth anything, it should teach us that peace is the gift of God and follows upon determined purity.

3. Power. Such conditions did not render the nation immune from hostility. The hosts of Ethiopia gathered against them. In the day of trouble, however, Asa knew the place of strength and Jehovah smote

his enemies before him, and victory followed purity. This also we are far from believing. Would that some nation could be persuaded amid the mistrust and political cunning of others, and take their stand wholly upon God!

4. Popularity. A very remarkable and interesting statement is made that the nation gathered around Asa "when they saw that Jehovah his God was with him." This truth is frequently demonstrated. Whenever a man arises devoted to God and determined to lead only in His faith and fear, multitudes respond to his call and follow.

Defeat by Fear.

The story of Asa's failure is briefly told, but it is as important as the story of his triumphs.

1. Fear. How to explain the presence of fear in the heart of this man is not easy. Possibly long continued peace had ministered to his weakening. Not that peace is wrong, but that it has its perils, and unless the soul be watchful, the moral fibre weakens where there is no conflict. Be the reason what it may, the fact remains that when Baasha gathered to battle against Judah, the heart of Asa was afraid.

2. Folly. "Herein thou hast done foolishly," said the prophet to him. His folly consisted in forgetfulness of Jehovah's watchfulness, and in his consequent alliance with Benhadad. Forgetfulness of God always magnifies the force of evil and leads to seeking security that is false.

3. Fierceness. Asa's anger with the prophet who tells him the truth is characteristic of the soul that has abandoned faith. The faithless heart resents exposure.

4. Feebleness. The closing story of Asa's life makes a sad ending of a man who had so remarkably co-operated with God. In human history nothing is more appalling than the wrecks of men who were once

men of power. The strongest man is ever weak when, instead of faith, fear dominates the life.

Conclusion.

The rectification of national decay can only come in one way. That is the true statesman who sees God and sets all lines of national life in right relation to Him. Alliances which forget God issue in no permanent value, though for the moment they may seem to be for the strengthening of the national position.

Lesson 41. JOASH AND THE SECOND REFORMATION IN JUDAH. Baalism in Judah Suppressed. Scripture Section, 2 Ki. chs. 11, 12

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

The Reign of Jehoshaphat over Judah.

The great son of Asa was a contemporary of Ahab of Israel. He continued the religious policy of his father, exhibited a larger capacity for administration and brought great prosperity and peace to his country. Actuated, no doubt, by a deep sense of the desirableness of peace with Israel, he made affinity with Ahab, marrying Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab, to his son Jehoram. This was a very serious error of judgment, although entirely in line with the political methods of the day. To provide against war by an alliance of the two royal families was a common political expedient. Athaliah, however, was like her mother Jezebel, a purposeful, indomitable, ambitious woman, capable of using to the utmost the opportunities which lay in her pathway in the promotion of the policies which she favored.

Through her example and influence the worship of the Phœnician Baal was given a popularization in Judah which became a source of real danger to the states. Jehoshaphat was truly a great and good king. The narratives which speak of him indirectly, namely, 1 Kings, ch. 22, and 2 Kings, ch. 3, bear out this judgment. He was a sincere worshipper of Jehovah and a loyal friend of the prophets. So long as he lived, the evil consequences of his alliance with the Northern Kingdom were not apparent.

His Immediate Successors.

Neither Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat, nor Ahaziah his son, were men of force. They were quite under the control of Athaliah, so that in the case of the latter it was fitting to say he was son-in-law to the house of Ahab. Athaliah's policy in Judah had even a freer scope than that of Jezebel in Israel, since the court was relatively a greater power in the smaller kingdom. In Judah, however, as in Israel, there were never wanting those who were faithful to the national ideals, and the eight or nine years of this regime were not enough to overthrow the results of the work of Asa and Jehoshaphat.

The Reign of Athaliah.

When Jehu initiated a new dynasty in Israel by putting to death Jehoram his king, he also terminated the reign of Ahaziah by causing him to be murdered. This was the bloody-minded Athaliah's opportunity to establish herself upon the throne of Judah. Scorning a regency, she "arose and destroyed all the seed royal." Her motive for this murderous deed can only be inferred. It justified absolutely the stern measures subsequently taken in reprisal. There is little which can be definitely related concerning her short reign. She contented herself, apparently, with promoting the interests of Baalism in every way, not seriously interfering with the temple of Jehovah or its ritual. She had a masterful desire to dominate the state.

The Crowning of Joash.

One little prince had been saved at the time of the massacre, by his aunt the wife of Jehoiada the high priest, and had been brought up by them in the secret recesses of the temple. He was a promising boy, and when he was six years of age, the high priest determined to place him upon the throne. The eleventh chapter of 2 Kings gives a graphic account of the revolution. Since the palace and the temple were in one enclosure it was necessary to act with great care. Having secured the allegiance of the requisite number of troops, Jehoiada arranged to have the coronation ceremony at the time of the changing of the guard so that double the usual number of soldiers could be on hand without incurring suspicion. Thus protected, the little Joash was anointed and hailed as king. Hearing the demonstration, Athaliah came up to the temple to investigate, but only to meet her justly deserved doom. Her death was followed by the rooting out of Baalism from city and land under the leadership of Jehoiada, who became the regent.

His Religious Achievements.

The reign of Joash is very much what we might expect from a boy controlled from his earliest youth by a strongly dominating character. He was jealous to forward the interests of the worship of Jehovah. He was interested in the repairing of the temple, and he supported in every way the authority of the priesthood. It was probably during this half century that the priesthood of the temple acquired the dignity and influence which emboldened the high priest and his subordinates at a later period to defy king Uzziah himself. The chief religious achievement of the time of Joash, indeed, was the establishment of the temple at Jerusalem, its priesthood and its ritual in a position of unquestioned supremacy over all other shrines. As long as Jehoiada lived his influence was supreme. Not unnaturally his death was an opportunity for Joash to seek counselors

of another character. This resulted in a factional dispute between the priestly party and their rivals which threatened to disrupt the state. It blighted the end of Joash's long reign, but not in such a way as to destroy the results of its dominating policy.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

Introductory.

The story of Joash thrills with romantic interest, is full of importance, and provides a solemn warning. These three phases are to be found in the natural order of procedure. An imaginative writer might easily build up a story full of incident and surprise around the early years. The teacher of men could not fail to find important lessons in the story of the life. The prophet desiring to warn men against the perils of the way, could find vivid illustration in the account of his final failure and death.

The Romance of the Early Years.

Every touch of the story thrills with interest. The saving of the baby from the blood-thirsty ambition of Athaliah, the last of Jezebel's daughters! The long hiding in the bed-chambers of the temple courts, where during those years this child of godless father and grandfather was surrounded by the influences of godliness! It is the story of the putting of heredity into the midst of environment in the earliest years, with what issue will be seen. Then the crowning by the priests under the guidance of Jehoiada, followed by the slaying of Athaliah! There is never a story so romantic as the one which perpetually might be told of God's over-ruling of the wrath of man, in order to the consummation of His purposes. When Athaliah destroyed the seed royal, there lay but the life of a baby between the fulfilment or failure of the Divine promise. Amid the victorious wrath of an ambitious woman,

God causes the tender solicitude of another woman to snatch this child from surrounding peril and guard it. Through all history this kind of thing recurs. More than once the whole purpose of God has rested upon the miraculous preservation of some baby life. The child of a Hebrew slave committed to the waters of the Nile, finally led the exodus. The child of a Hebrew maid, carried into Egypt to escape the brutality of Herod, accomplished the greater Exodus. Silently but irresistibly God works; amid apparent disaster He triumphs.

The Teaching of the Life.

The direct activities of Joash reveal the strength of the influence of the early years. He was a child of the temple. There his childish life had been lived, and all the influences of the sacred place had enfolded him. It is not remarkable then, but perfectly natural that at his crowning he, under the guidance of Jehoiada, entered into a covenant between Jehovah, the people, and himself, resulting in the breaking down of the altars of Baal, and the initiation of a movement for repairing the temple. Jehoiada's influence over him is manifest in the statement he "did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah all the days wherein Jehoiada the priest instructed him." It is also evident that he exercised a right influence over Jehoiada, and the priests, as is seen in his dealings with them concerning the building of the temple. It would seem as though the lesson of supreme value for us is that of the importance of early training. Here is a boy whose father and grandfather were utterly evil men, putting the strength of his life into the work of reformation and reconstruction. There is no work for the Church or the nation of greater importance than that of safeguarding the young. If the children of evil parents could be removed and surrounded by the atmosphere of the temple, the chances are that the force of a true environment would prevail against a false inheritance.

The Warning of the End.

These stories become sadly monotonous as they bring us face to face with such constant repetition of failure. Oh, the misery of it, and the warning of it! After years of true living, this man manifested the most fatuous weakness in that he took the sacred treasures, in order to buy off the possibility of invasion by Hazael. Moreover, when rebuked by Zechariah, he became angry, and instigated the murder of the prophet, who was the son of his old friend Jehoiada. Finally he died, himself murdered.

Perhaps in these last days the hereditary taint manifested itself. If so, it was because he ceased to abide in the true environment of relationship to God. How solemn the warning! No man can afford to cease the life of watchfulness, and this is especially true if somewhere in the past there is a history of passion and of sin.

Lesson 42. ISAIAH THE STATESMAN-PROPHET. His Warnings against Social Corruption and Foreign Alliances. Scripture Section, Is. 5: 1—9: 7

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

The Century Preceding Isaiah.

From the close of the reign of Joash until the time that Isaiah began to prophesy was not far from a century. It was a century which witnessed some striking changes. As in Israel during the long and peaceful reign of Jeroboam II, so in Judah during the contemporaneous reign of Uzziah, a marked social and political change came over the people. They began as never before to come into touch with the wider world. Com-

merce and war each meant more than contact with the neighboring states. The simplicity of life gave way to contrasts of luxury and profuseness with abject poverty; of power in high places, unblushingly used to further private interests, with much bitterness of soul among the people. There was a strong tendency to make the worship of Jehovah prevailingly mechanical, a sort of quid pro quo religion. This development was caused by the unwonted prosperity and profound peace maintained by Uzziah, and by the lack of that heroic type of religious leadership which alone would seem to interpret and direct such success. Joash had firmly established the priesthood as the religious leaders of Judah. There is no evidence of any loss of zeal in Judah for those outward forms of religious life which the priesthood especially fostered. It became the criticism of Isaiah that in their excessive zeal for the perpetuation of the forms of their religion, the people of Judah had quite lost sight of its spirit. All these conditions developed abnormally in the fated reign of Ahaz. He was a young king, unbalanced, unprincipled, without large or generous qualities. Such a sovereign and his country were sure to come to a speedy wreck unless they could have a brave, clear-headed and broad-minded prophet like Isaiah to remind them of their obligations and opportunities.

The Political Horizon.

Perhaps not even Isaiah, notable as he was, could have gained the ear of his people, had the later years of Uzziah and those of his successors been free from national apprehension. Judah in common with Israel and the other Palestinian states, was watching the gradual advance of the invincible armies of Assyria. They had the most profound respect for her resourcefulness and skill. When Rezin and Pekah besieged Ahaz in his own capital, they were unquestionably trying to force him to join a general offensive and defensive alliance of all the petty states of Palestine. Ahaz believed it

was better worth his own while to declare himself and his people vassals of Assyria and leave the other nations to their fate, and he persisted in so doing, despite the dismay and contempt of his noblest citizens. He thereby basely yielded without a blow the freedom which Judah had always cherished, and dishonored his dynasty.

The Work of Isaiah.

Isaiah was apparently a disciple of the slightly earlier prophets Amos and Hosea. In his case as in theirs the inspiring factor was a dominating conception of the character of Jehovah. Isaiah's point of view is expressed in the account of the vision which constituted his call. Jehovah was not merely the Righteous One of Amos, or the Being of limitless love revealed to Hosea, but the Holy One of Israel, the Being without any limitation. In Him the prophet's confidence was absolute. But this trustfulness quickened in him a sense of the nation's responsibility for maintaining ideals of character and conduct which such a being could approve. His earliest preaching, therefore, followed closely upon that of Amos and Hosea, being broader and more final only because he was a man of wider experience, deeper insight and finer education. Amos was a farmer and Hosea probably a man of limited prominence, while Isaiah was one of the very foremost men of his day, one who enjoyed no doubt the finest educational advantages of the day. He belonged at court, his tastes were all aristocratic, and he was especially well able to understand the political tendencies of the times. Like Amos and Hosea, he denounced in these earliest sermons of Chapters 2-5 the corruption of the people, and predicted that it would involve a visitation by Jehovah, who might in His sovereign providence use Assyria as His instrument of punishment; but he rounded up their expression of hope for the future by his famous phrase, emphasized by being given as a name to one of his children, "The remnant shall

turn," an idea which became immediately fundamental to prophecy. It claimed, without limiting, the fulfilment of Jehovah's redemptive purpose.

His Political Views.

Naturally one who held so broad and strong a conception of the character of Jehovah and of his close relationship with men of the right sort would not hesitate to trust him in time of need. He sought to reassure the cowardly Ahaz by reminding him of the absurd difference between the emergency which confronted him and the power of Jehovah. When Ahaz would not yield his purpose nor were the people willing to prevent its execution, Isaiah saw clearly that the over-lordship of Assyria was inevitable, that the king had cast away the inheritance of his worthy successor, that days of gloom and disaster were before the people, yet so fully did he trust Jehovah's power and appreciate his purpose that he could see at the time of deepest darkness the dawning of a great light. In due time the repentant Remnant would be given a victorious leader under whom they would bring to realization the historic will of Jehovah.

This was a truly remarkable religious outlook, worthy of a master mind. Entirely unlimited in time, it yet kept alive the faith and encouraged the fidelity of those in Judah who followed the great prophet.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

Introductory.

There is no more remarkable era in the history of the ancient people than the prophetic, and there are no more remarkable men than these prophets. Among them in many respects Isaiah is supreme. These men were the messengers of God, first and last and always. They did not, however, deal with the theories of spiritual matters, but with the application of fundamental truths to the conditions of life which they found around them. They were more occupied with national matters than

with individual. Having the largest outlook upon the purpose of God in the creation of the nation, the burden of their messages consisted in calling men back to right relationship with God, in order that the nation might realize itself and fulfil its destiny.

In the present lesson we have revealed the supreme vision which created Isaiah's outlook and inspired his work, the consequent conviction which came to him of the true condition of the people and the ultimate victory of God, and the instances of the statesmanship resulting from such convictions, resulting from such a vision.

A Great Vision.

Uzziah was probably the only king Isaiah had known, and at his death the throne on earth became empty. It was in the presence of that empty throne that he became conscious, as never before, of a throne that was never empty. The king was dead, but the King reigned. In the hour when his eyes had no king to look upon, he beheld the King. The result produced within his own soul the vision of sin, with the answering cleansing of the coal of fire, and prepared him for the consecration to the purposes of God. To believing hearts the lesson is perfectly evident, and yet how slow the world is to learn it. The first condition of true statesmanship is a vision of the throne that is never vacant, and of the One who sits thereupon. In all history as men have had that vision their statesmanship has made for the uplifting of the people. Where it has been lost, policy has tended to degradation.

The Consequent Conviction.

The vision of God created not only a vision of Himself, but a vision of the true condition of the people. In the song of the vineyard we have a poetic and forceful description of the failure of the nation. God in perfect justice looks for justice, but finds oppression; looks for righteousness, but hears the cry which tells of wrong. The message of a man thus seeing clearly

is not only general, but becomes sharply scientific, and deals with the sins of men and of women, thus revealing the actual sins of a God-neglecting society. And yet again, such a vision of God creates a sense of His ultimate triumph, and the prophet is able to speak to his age of the coming Immanuel, upon whose shoulder the government is to rest. It is ever thus. To see God is therefore to see sin clearly, and to dare to name it definitely. It is nevertheless to see beyond all the process to the consummation, and to know the true kingdom must be established under the true King, for "the zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform it." Prophetic messengers are often called pessimistic, because they dare to tell the truth about sin. As a matter of fact, they are the only optimists, for they alone know the certainty of the coming kingdom.

The Consequent Statesmanship.

In the hour of the peril of his people Isaiah was able to raise his protest against panic, and to utter a note of warning against the formation of alliances which, however expedient they might appear, were contrary to the purpose of God and against the highest welfare of the state.

Conclusion.

There is only one principle of true statesmanship. It is not that of human diplomacy, but that of the consciousness of God. When statesmen are actuated by other motives, it is time for the voice of the prophet to be heard reaffirming the truth about God, and resolutely setting all national and personal life in the light of that truth. Such a prophet may not be popular, and he may have to cry out in anguish, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed," but if he keep silent, then there is no hope for the nation. The truest patriotism comes of the recognition of God, and expresses itself in the delivery of His message.

Lesson 43. HEZEKIAH AND THE THIRD REFORMATION IN JUDAH. Idols Destroyed, and the Temple Service Reorganized. Scripture Section, 2 Chron. chs. 29-31

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

The Pause In Isaiah's Career as a Prophet.

Isaiah's prophetic career was at least forty years in length, and perhaps more extended. He described himself as beginning in the year when King Uzziah died, namely, about 739 B. C., and we may be confident that he was an active prophet about 700 B. C. From the days of his impotent attempt to influence the political policy of King Ahaz until well into the reign of Hezekiah, there are but few public messages which can with reasonable probability be attributed to him. It is generally supposed that the strong displeasure of King Ahaz and the marked unwillingness of the people to adopt the policy he advocated caused Isaiah to go for the time into a kind of dignified retirement. Gathering like-minded men around him, he devoted himself to study and instruction. It is not unlikely that the young prince Hezekiah came thus under his continued influence; for he not only was a lifelong friend and loyal supporter of the noble prophet, but evinced the utmost zeal in promoting the policy and principles for which Isaiah stood.

Hezekiah's Inheritance.

It is not easy to determine the date of the accession of Hezekiah to the throne. Of the two statements in 2 Kings, ch. 18, verses 9 and 10 assume 728 B. C. as the date; verse 13 assumes 715 B. C. Nor is the authority of the chronicler good enough historically to make it certain that of the two great events mentioned in this lesson as especially noteworthy the religious reformation took place at the very beginning of the reign. Good authorities hold to the various opinions which are mere-

ly noted in order to remark that the exhibition of the religious value of the career of Hezekiah does not depend upon any one solution of these uncertainties. We may be perfectly sure that the deliverance from Sennacherib and the great reformation were two notable facts of Hezekiah's reign, whether they occurred with a considerable interval between them, or, as many think, in quick and logical succession. Ahaz bequeathed to Hezekiah a depressing situation. Judah was an acknowledged and helpless vassal of Assyria. The northern kingdom was either on the eve of losing its political individuality, or had already lost it. Sargon, one of the most pitiless and persistent of world sovereigns, sat upon the throne of Assyria. The little kingdoms of the Mediterranean coast were apprehensive of speedy extinction. Hezekiah's people could easily have lost heart altogether.

His Personal Qualities.

Hezekiah was a very different man from his father. He gladly identified himself with better men and a nobler policy. The principle emphasized earlier by Isaiah that Jehovah was wholly worthy of trust and confidence, met a complete response in his mind. He unquestionably set himself to that which was feasible in the way of reform, and to such measures as would unite once more the most earnest and faithful of his subjects, and encourage them and his whole kingdom to renewed enthusiasm for national betterment. The courage of the young king was shown by his unhesitating attack on objects and places of long established duration. He seems to have realized that the village places of public worship with their symbolic pillars and trees were increasingly hurtful in fostering forms of worship essentially hostile to that of Jehovah, and destroyed many of them. Particularly did he break in pieces the bronze serpent, regarded with idolatrous veneration by the people as a relic of the days of Mosaic leadership. Whatever hindered the wise promotion of Jehovah worship,

he destroyed. None the less did he turn his attention to the everyday needs of his country. By sharply repressing the raids of his neighbors, he made Judah respected and feared by every other petty state, and regarded by them as their natural leader. Like a prudent sovereign, moreover, he foresaw the possible exigencies of the future and put much time and means into the construction of a pool and conduit which added largely to the certain water supply of the fortified city.

The Popular Revival.

That one of Hezekiah's temperament and purposes should seek to arouse a renewed interest in the temple and its services goes without saying. Concerning the exact method by which he carried out his laudable purpose, only the chronicler informs us. His tendency to describe each event of the history in terms of the usage of his own day, which was five hundred years later, and the very considerable difference between his description of the details and that given in the book of Kings, make us unwilling to lay too great stress upon particulars. It is not worth while to draw many conclusions concerning the religious methods of Hezekiah's time from the chronicler's account. It is unfortunate that the chronicler is our only authority for the holding of the great passover, since the writer of Kings enthusiastically refers to the passover held by Josiah, 2 Kings 23:21, 22, and seems to say rather distinctly that it was the first great celebration since the days of the Judges. It is certainly strange that so important and characteristic a national festival should have fallen into disuse. Quite possibly, as some have suggested, the historical writers never have occasion to mention it because of its very frequency.

As related by the chronicler, Hezekiah's scheme of reformation was most comprehensive. Having opened the temple, he bade the officials to cleanse and sanctify it, and then held a great public service of worship. Assembling then his people from all parts of his dominion

and those who could be reached elsewhere, a great passover was held, especially symbolizing the reunion of Jehovah and all His faithful ones; 2 Chronicles 30:18, 19 well describe the broad and free spirit of such a ceremony as must have taken place under the guidance of Hezekiah and Isaiah. Such a getting together quickened the popular conscience and led to a general revival of religious faith and practice. The beneficent effects of this religious reform, if it took place early in the reign, were about as temporary as they are often found to be in similar situations. The enthusiasm and prestige of its two leaders swept into nominal conformity and possibly into temporary zeal many, especially of the upper classes, whose hearts were not in the movement. Very few years elapsed before they were the avowed enemies of all that Isaiah represented.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

Introductory.

The story of Hezekiah's reign affords an instance of one of the most thorough reformations in the history of the ancient people of God. There can be no doubt that the character of the man was largely the result of the influence upon him of the teaching and personality of Isaiah. In applying the lessons of this reformation, it may be well to consider the consciousness of the king out of which it sprang, and the conduct which characterized it.

The Consciousness Producing Reformation.

When Hezekiah ascended the throne his kingdom was surrounded by enemies. Instead of giving his attention to the state of affairs from the standpoint of a politician, he at once struck at the root of the whole mischief. God had been insulted, and to His throne right relationship must first be established. This is a truth abiding for all time—the condition of the temple

is more important than that of the frontier. Religion is a matter of greater moment than foreign policy. Dealing thus with fundamental matters, it is remarkable to notice how keen was Hezekiah's sense of sin as to its nature and effect. His description (2 Chron. 29: 6, 7) of the development of sin is worthy of close study, so graphically does he set forth what so often takes place, namely, trespass, evil done in the sight of God, God forsaken, faces turned from His habitation, closing of the doors, putting out of the lamps, and failure to offer incense and offerings.

Equally clear is his sense that all the tribulation and anguish following is the result of sin. When Gladstone said that England's greatest trouble was the weakening of her sense of sin, he uttered the words of profound statesmanship. The trouble is that familiarity with sin is so terribly liable to rob men of the sense of its awfulness. Hence the profound necessity for cultivating that communion with God, and familiarity with the vision of His holiness which, compelling us to measure things by His standards, will keep us conscious of the real nature of sin. Only out of such consciousness can true reformation ever spring.

The Conduct of the Reformation.

It is most interesting to study the line of Hezekiah's procedure. He began with himself. It is "in my heart." This is the language of definite determination, not of sentimental inclination. It is the language of a man taking a lonely definite stand for God. He then called priests and Levites to come and cleanse the temple. It took the whole company of these men sixteen days to carry out the filth. After the Levites, the princes were called for the offering of a sin offering for the kingdom, and for the sanctuary, and for Judah. Following this, Israel and Judah were summoned to assemble and keep the passover, the great feast, which carried them back to the birth of the nation and reminded them of their relationship to God. Following

this again came the breaking in pieces of the obelisks, and hewing down of Asherim, and breaking down of high places, and of altars.

This is the true line of reformation work. First, a man convinced and consecrated for initiation. Then judgment begins at the house of God. It is well to remember that the temple will have no power with the nation until its own filth is carried forth. There must be fitness for service before God puts into commission.

Following the re-consecration of priests and the cleansing of the temple must come recognition by the rulers of their responsibility toward God. Public penitence of those in high places is of the utmost importance. It is thus that earthly authority is made mighty, for the influence which comes as the Divine benediction is permanent, is mighty in its force, and unlimited in its scope. Then beyond these must be the coming of the rank and file back to the broken altars, back to the consciousness of God, back to worship. And finally, with the restoration of the true, there must be the resolute breaking down of the false, for there can be no fellowship between righteousness and iniquity, no agreement between the temple of God and idols.

Lesson 44. HEZEKIAH IN TROUBLE. The Help Rendered him by Isaiah. Scripture Section, Is. chs. 36-39

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

The Accession of Sennacherib.

Empires won by force of arms are retained only by the constant exhibition of overmastering might. Sargon, the ruler of the Assyrian empire, had proven that he could both win and hold securely the many kingdoms which acknowledged themselves to be his vassals. By a severe lesson he had taught the little principalities of Palestine to beware of defying him. In all probability Judah was not involved in the revolt which made this lesson necessary, for the reason that Isaiah used his influence (Is. 20) against such an outbreak.

When Sargon died, his son and successor, Sennacherib, was confronted by a rapid succession of revolts which almost stripped his vast inheritance of its value. He was forced to begin with the Eastern and Southern dependencies and to conquer them into actual subjection. Gradually he worked around to the "Westland." The states of Syria and Palestine had revolted along with the others, Hezekiah, this time, being unable to resist the pressure of his nobles who were quite strongly arrayed in favor of throwing off Assyria's galling yoke. No doubt they would scarcely have dared such a move, had not the sovereign of Egypt, eager to weaken the power of his hated rival of Assyria, heaped up promises of aid and support.

His Steady Advance upon Palestine.

Sennacherib proved himself fully adequate to cope with even so deplorable a situation. Despite the intrigues of his wily enemies (Is. 39), the formidable coalitions against him, the wide extent of the revolting territory, he addressed himself with great skill, sagacity and patience to the subjection of his rebellious provinces. Within about three years of his accession he had

fastened his grip again upon the greater portion of the old empire and was free to turn his attention to Syria and Palestine. A good share of the chapters in the book of Isaiah were written about this time, and reproduce for us the conditions with which Isaiah had to deal.

His Dealings with Hezekiah.

Sennacherib quickly crushed the rebellious princelings of the Mediterranean coast. He overran Judah, but Hezekiah, at a tremendous cost, purchased pardon and nominal independence. The tardy advance of the Egyptian army to attack Sennacherib was formidable enough to make him unwilling to have a strong city like Jerusalem in his rear, so he demanded—contrary to his pledged word—its immediate surrender. This was unnatural or at least unexpected, but it greatly altered the situation. It stamped the Assyrian as treacherous and lacking in good faith, and justified Isaiah in exhorting the king to confidently maintain his rights, trusting in the help of Jehovah. The king rose to the demand of the hour and refused absolutely to yield the city. It was so advantageously situated as to require a long and costly siege, but he never had the opportunity to get at it. He was obliged to gather in his troops to meet the onset of the Egyptian army and did not again threaten Jerusalem.

Isaiah's Share in the Defense.

Hezekiah would hardly have been equal to the situation, had not the prophet Isaiah stood at his right hand. He was the far-sighted statesman of the day. When the besotted nobles were plotting a bold resistance by the aid of Egypt to the great king, he declared with scorn (Is. 30:7) the worthlessness of such an alliance and exhorted the people to trust in none save Jehovah, their God. This was another way of saying that they ought to follow the policy which was dictated by honor and wisdom and good faith.

When the Assyrian became the heartless deceiver, deliberately breaking his plighted word, then Isaiah felt

that God could not but thwart the selfish, boastful and needless destruction of the city in which seemed to center all hopes of the future of Israel. He steadfastly encouraged Hezekiah to resist, and declared that the city was inviolate. Alone he sustained the courage of king and people by his own magnificent faith and definite hopefulness.

The Great Deliverance.

Sennacherib routed the army of Egypt; but in the very hour of victory his great force, attacked by pestilence and disturbed by rumors of defections at home, fled away from Palestine in haste. It was a notable confirmation of Isaiah's confident declaration. It established the king and people in their purpose to serve whole-heartedly and forever.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

Introductory.

In this lesson Hezekiah is seen in two different places of trial. The first is relative, that of Sennacherib's invasion. The second is personal, that of physical sickness. It is important to notice how the most honored servants of God are liable to times of testing, and in the present case it is of great value to watch this man, from whose experience we gather encouragement and warning.

The National Trouble.

The challenge of the Rabshakeh was at once daring and blasphemous. He first announces the folly of putting any trust in the king of Egypt. Then in tones of mockery he suggests that Jehovah has commissioned them to come up against the land. It was indeed an address full of strategy, framed by a man who evidently understood exactly how to strike terror into the hearts of the Hebrew people. Their contact with Egypt had always brought trouble to them; and their history had taught them that God had visited them in punishment through peoples outside the covenant.

Such hours are the most perilous to the servant of God. Never is there greater need of communion than when the tempter blasphemously lies in the language of truth. It is ever one of the subtlest methods of evil to take the arguments of faith and use them against the people of faith. The enemy adopted it in the wilderness with Jesus.

Hezekiah went into the house of Jehovah and communicated with His servant Isaiah. The result was immediate. Isaiah sent a message of hope to Hezekiah, and the Rabshakeh withdrew. There is but one place of refuge when faith is so subtly assaulted, and that is the place of communion with God. In that exercise, perplexity vanishes and faith is established. The extremity of man is man's opportunity for proving God, and to act in accordance with this fact is always to see deliverance wrought.

The trouble is not over, however. It presented itself again and in more daring form. The messengers now brought a definite and blasphemous defiance of Jehovah.

The prayer of Hezekiah is full of beauty, and its method will bear study as a pattern for all time. It first affirms the truth concerning the position and power of God; then speaks of the trouble threatening; and finally asks for deliverance. In every day of trouble it is well to reaffirm the grounds of confidence in the presence of God, and then lay the facts of peril before Him, seeking His help. When we are conscious of the power at our disposal, we have confidence both to speak our fears and to emphasize our hopes.

The promise of the answer to Hezekiah came through Isaiah and took the form of an impassioned defiance of the boastful foe, in a great boasting in the strength of Jehovah.

To know the secret place of communion is to know true courage. Courage is an affair of the heart, and when the heart is homed in God all opposing forces are measured by comparison with Him. Such comparison can do no other than wake the song of triumph.

The Personal Affection.

The picture of Hezekiah sick, and the revelation his song gives of his passion for life are most pathetic. Here again he turns to Jehovah. Jehovah hears and spares his life. Notice in passing that while the restoration was by the will and act of God, nevertheless means were made use of to bring about the recovery.

It is a great question whether this prayer for life was wise, or rather whether it revealed the highest possible attitude of life. During the fifteen years added Hezekiah committed the greatest folly of his life in the matter of the Babylonian ambassadors. Would it not have been better for his life to have been shorter and so saved from a failure which entailed such subsequent sorrow? It cannot be said that it was actually wrong, for God heard and granted his request. The question is whether there is not a better way, namely, ceasing to desire even life, save as it comes as the gift of God. Some prayers teach us when answered, that there is a better way than the one we asked. The Psalmist declares of the desires of the ancient people in the wilderness, "He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul" (Ps. 106:15). The lesson is not easy to learn, but it is full of importance; it is better to rest content in His provision, praying only that His will should be done.

Conclusion.

This whole lesson deals with a man of prayer and reveals the place and power of prayer in a life, and also its limitations. It is good in every hour of peril to find the way into the sanctuary, and placing between the soul and its foes the living God, to wait for His deliverance. In the hour of personal trial it is good to turn the face to the wall to see God only, but then communion and rest are better than desire and petition. Better to walk through the dreaded darkness and maintain a testimony that is unmarred, than to seek a deliverance in the strength of which to fail and falter. "Fret not thyself." . . . "Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him."

Lesson 45. JOSIAH AND THE LAST REFORMATION IN JUDAH. The Centralization of Worship. Scripture Section, 2 Ki. 22: 1-23: 30

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

The Idolatrous Reaction under Manasseh.

The last few years of the reign of Hezekiah were doubtless years of outward harmony. Then surely the prophetic party was in full favor. It directed the policy, it affected the tone, it established the standards of the nation. Perhaps it was too paternal and triumphant; perhaps its promises were too glowing and its exactions too frequent. At any rate the accession of the young Manasseh for a reign of half a century was marked by a complete reversal of conditions. The prophets were persecuted to the death. The gods of the Assyrian overlords became popular and their shrines were multiplied. The temple itself was not exempt from the presence of an idolatrous image. The overthrow of all for which Isaiah and his followers had stood seemed complete.

The Prophetic Opportunity.

But even then the situation was not absolutely hopeless. The prophets could not for a long time take an active part in public life, but it was equally impossible for such men to be wholly inactive. Driven into seclusion, they were forced in a natural way into literary and theological constructiveness. They began to give themselves to the task of collecting, arranging, and interpreting the records of the past generations, with the particular purpose of showing that fidelity to Jehovah was the secret of the prosperity of the past and disregard of His will an invariable assurance of disaster. Thus began to come into being such reviews of history as we find in the books of Judges, Samuel and Kings. There was also a work of collating and publishing the sacred law which seems to have been taken up by them

in this generation. If the book of Deuteronomy in its present form did not come down from the time of Moses, as many hold, it seems to have been a greatly needed restatement and condensation of ancient and hallowed material, which was thus put into a form which would appeal to the men of that day. Thus the prophets, while under the ban of the king, were really able to do two kinds of constructive work which were greatly in demand.

The Young King Josiah.

Meanwhile they were not ceasing from their chosen work of personal influence, and at last their day again returned. With the accession of the young king Josiah, a new era dawned for the righteous and godly element in Israel. Endowed by nature with fine and strong qualities, he was happily under the tutorship and influence of such men as Jeremiah and Zephaniah, the strong leaders of his generation. With real wisdom, however, they advised the little king to no hasty measures of reform for which the people were unprepared.

The Prophetic Reform Campaign.

They gave themselves instead to a deliberate campaign of prophetic appeal among the people. Two aspects of the political situation favored their work. It was clear, on the one hand, that the gods of Assyria were not after all invincible, for the great capital city, Nineveh, was actually in danger. Nahum could confidently predict, as he did either at this time or a few years later, that that old lion's lair was to be raided and given over to destruction. On the other hand, the Scythians, of whom Herodotus gives us trustworthy but scanty information, were threatening all Western Asia. Jeremiah describes their brutal and resistless advance (Jer. 5:14-18; 6:22-26). Zephaniah, too, calls the people to repentance lest this horde become the appointed scourge of God, the partakers of the great sacrificial banquet of which Israel will be the food (Zeph.

1:7-13). While the Scythians were advancing these and other prophets were actively preaching repentance. But they made slight impression until the failure of the horde to attack Jerusalem was universally interpreted as a Divine deliverance. With eager gratitude the nation turned to Jehovah's worship.

The Great Reformation.

King and people united at once in pushing extensive repairs upon the temple. During these the Book of the Law was found and publicly read. Whether new or old it was novel and impressive to the nation. It was the precepts of their revered national law-giver expressed in terms which vigorously appealed to their pride, their reverence, their loyalty, and their hope for the future. A wave of religious revival swept over the people, vigorously promoted by king and prophets. In details the reform was more thorough than any preceding one. The last vestiges of idolatry were abolished. Once more apparently the whole nation was united in loyalty to Jehovah.

For a dozen years conditions in Judah must have seemed to an earnest worshiper of Jehovah almost ideal. The sudden death of Josiah at Megiddo, where he rashly tried to obstruct the aggression of the new Egyptian king, brought this golden age to an unexpected and tragic close. But its fruitage was permanent.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

Introductory.

The condition of affairs at the time of Josiah's reformation can best be understood by a careful consideration of the things done away with by that reformation. Twice during the preceding sixty years the land had been deluged with idolatrous practices. It would seem as though the whole of the people were almost absolutely given over to every form of abomination. The work of Josiah was drastic and far-reaching, and yet

the permanent results were almost nothing. The chief lessons for us, however, gather round the finding of the Book of the Law as the chief inspiration of the reformation, and the worthlessness of the cleansing in the case of the people themselves.

The Reformation and Its Cause.

Josiah's interest in the work of the reformation began before the finding of the book, but the thoroughness of the work, so far as he was concerned, was due to the finding. Recent attempts have been made to refer the term "Book of the Law" to Deuteronomy only. It is far more likely that it refers to the whole of the books of Moses. While the curses which Josiah feared are written in Deuteronomy, the passover which was so fully observed is arranged for by Exodus, and as the observance of that passover was part of the issue of the reformation, it is only fair to suppose that the book containing instructions was also found. The point of interest, however, lies in the fact that the re-discovery of an authoritative revelation of God revealed terrible departure of the people from the divine economy. The whole system of life and worship had so far departed from the law of God that the discovery of the law comes as a startling revelation.

It is possible to build up a whole system of life around a truth until it is powerless and forgotten. Precisely the same thing happened in the dark ages. The Church became corrupt beyond compare, though its very existence was due to the revelations of God and its constitution was given in the Scriptures. The re-discovery of the Bible by Martin Luther brought about what we speak of as the Reformation.

Is it not true even to-day that, as a living book of direct value, the Bible is too often hidden under a mass of tradition and violated in its teaching by many who claim relationship to the Church of which it is the charter? Would not a real re-discovery of it and an actual application of its teaching bring about a reforma-

tion which would amount even to revolution of many of our customs even within the Church? To say the least, it would be well for us to dare to make the attempt. The true reformer in these days is the man who will bring back into all the activities of the Church the word of God as a living and authoritative message.

The Failure of the Reformation and Its Cause.

The reformation failed so far as the people were concerned. When the book was remitted to Huldah for confirmation of its validity, she at once pronounced it authoritative, but declared that while the king should be spared because his heart was right, yet the curses the book pronounced should surely fall upon the people because they had forsaken God.

The failure speaks to us to-day in solemn warning. To take the Scriptures merely as a book of regulations for outward conduct is of no avail for man or nation. There must be inward and spiritual obedience. Character is more than creed. Great propositions of reformation are suggested to-day along the lines of applying the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount to the conduct of the age. Nothing can avail, however, that does not begin by the turning of men back to God in heart.

Conclusion.

The value of the Divine revelation is remarkably emphasized by this lesson, and also its true use. Without its corrective note abuses of all sorts will go on unchecked until the Church will be so conformed to the world that the line of demarcation will be obliterated.

Lesson 46. JEREMIAH THE PROPHET. His Warnings Rejected and Jerusalem Captured. Scripture Section, Jer. ch. 36; 2 Ki. 23: 36-24: 17

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

His Call to Prophetic Service

If ever a human being was born with an aptitude for the work actually performed by him, that one was Jeremiah. An ardent patriot, a student of history and of life, a far-sighted and discriminating judge of tendencies, political and social, a firm believer in the power, wisdom, righteousness and goodness of God, and withal a man of iron resolution along with all of his natural tenderness, he was rarely fitted to serve his generation with success. It must be said that to the men of his day and even to himself his career seemed a ridiculous failure. We can trace in his utterances the battles he had to wage in his own soul against the sense of loneliness, isolation, despondency, and sometimes even a kind of doubt. Every project dear to him went wrong. Even the great and happy reformation in which he participated in his earlier active days did not accomplish lasting results. From one end of his life to the other he was a more or less disappointed man, yet in every crisis he was faithful to his prophetic opportunity.

A pathetic touch is given to his life when we read in the account of his summons to prophetic activity that he foresaw these conditions. He was not eager to undertake the office; he knew the unpopularity of the messages he must deliver; he needed the promise that Jehovah would be his wall of defense, his pillar, his shield from the foes who would bitterly attack him from every point of vantage.

In spite of these conditions, perhaps because of them, Jeremiah was the great oracle to his half century. He maintained steadfastly the Divine initiation and direc-

tion of its distinctive events; he explained its disasters as proof of the persistence of God's righteous purposes; he affirmed also that the great Divine purpose was Israel's active repentance and obedience.

His Melancholy Duty.

While king Josiah was on the throne his prophesying, like that of Isaiah, was directed chiefly at the social sins of the people and the need of repentance. He was an apostle of reform. He had many friends, disciples and allies. He was reasonably popular. At the accession of Jehoiakim all was changed. Then came the real beginning of his painful experience. Regarded with contemptuous scorn by the king and his circle, branded by them as a traitor and a croaker of evil, who achieved only the paralyzing of his people's energies, he came to be avoided by all in a way which made life lonely. This result was the more quickly reached because in the prophetic order were many men of standing and influence who bitterly opposed and openly insulted him. No wonder that the common people failed to discriminate. A Pashhur (20:2) and a Hananiah (28:1-13) may well have seemed to them as worthy of trust.

Jeremiah was a friendly soul, delighting in harmony and good-will, hence his life was for many years a living tragedy, since he did not cease because of the persecution to give expression to that which had aroused it. He only comforted himself in God and declared the truth which he saw.

The Sudden Change of the Political Map.

About the time of Josiah's death Nineveh was approaching its fall. It was, in fact, the evident weakness of Assyria that prompted the Pharaoh to advance with a huge army into Syria with the hope of supplanting that nation as sovereign of the Western Asiatic peoples. A year or two later Nineveh capitulated to the Medes and Babylonians, who redistributed the rights of empire, Nabopolassar the Babylonian sovereign receiving as much as he could conquer and hold of the

countries west of the Tigris. As soon as possible a decisive struggle for supremacy took place at Carchemish on the upper Euphrates, between the forces of Babylonia, led by the young prince, Nebuchadnezzar, and the host of Egypt. The latter was utterly routed, almost annihilated. At one stroke the great question of mastery was settled. Almost at once by the death of his father Nebuchadnezzar became the sovereign of the West.

Nebuchadnezzar God's Servant.

Jeremiah saw that the new ruler was the dominant personality of that age. He opposed in every way resistance to him, and pleaded with Judah to repent lest God should use him as a scourge. In spite of Jeremiah, the nation under Jehoiakim's lead did rebel and suffered the light penalty, because of a prompt submission, of a partial captivity. Those who were carried away were the choicest personalities, according to Jeremiah (ch. 24), but only a fraction of the people.

Under king Zedekiah there was only a nominal submission. Jeremiah, convinced that God had abandoned the hope of continuing the nation, saw no other prospect than that of dissolution and captivity. Nebuchadnezzar had received his commission. This outlook, however, opened the way to a brighter one. God would unite, some day, all truly obedient servants, and thus create a new Israel for service.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

Introductory.

Our lesson brings us into the midst of terrible times. With the passing of Josiah all the apparent reformation came to an end. As Huldah had foretold there had been no heart repentance, and with the accession of Jehoiakim, there was an immediate return of all into idolatrous practices of the past. Jeremiah, who had been associated with Josiah in the work of reformation, was now commissioned by God to deliver the message

of denunciation and judgment. He was a man of great heart, and all he suffered caused him the most intense sorrow. Nevertheless he was loyal to God and delivered his message, notwithstanding the fact that its delivery put him in great peril. There are two matters which demand our most careful attention: (1) The word of the Lord, and (2) the message of the Lord.

The Word of the Lord.

This word was communicated directly to Jeremiah, and its nature was essentially of judgment. Israel and Judah had filled up the cup of their iniquity to the brim, and the time was come for judgment. Yet it must be carefully noted that the uttering of the words of judgment was an utterance of mercy. "It may be that the house of Judah will hear; . . . that they may return; that I may forgive" (Jer. 36:3). God never visits a man or nation with judgment until every chance has been given of repentance. In this the real tenderness of the denunciation is manifest. When He who knows the heart of man knows that there will be no repentance, He still speaks again that no excuse may be offered, and every mouth may be stopped when His judgment comes. The king received the message in defiance and committed the writing to the fire. Daring is the courage of foolhardiness. But it cannot destroy the word uttered, nor prevent its fulfillment. More than once has the written word of God been burned, but never destroyed. In spite of rebellion the truth has triumphed. In these days men do not commit to the flames the written word. They have other ways of attempting its destruction—by denial of its Divine origin and the authority of its message. Those who testify to its truth and repeat its messages may have to suffer and wait like Jeremiah, but history will vindicate them and it.

The Message of the Lord.

The whole of the facts concerning Jeremiah need to be kept in mind in order to get an understanding of

all that the delivery of the message meant to him. He was a man of sensitive nature, loving his people with a great love and hating the thought of their suffering. Yet he was a man loving God more than men. Loyalty to the Lord compelled his uttering of the things so dreadful and at such personal cost. This is God's constant method, the true messenger is always a son of love. When the final judgment had to be pronounced upon Jerusalem, the King of Love himself pronounced it in a voice choked with emotion. Oh, that all upon whom God lays the awful burden of delivering the doom of the finally impenitent would remember this! Only weeping men have any right to speak of the strange and awful yet necessary acts of the Divine judgment.

Yet, however tenderly delivered, such messages will always meet opposition, for the heart of man is ever in rebellion against the most righteous judgment of God. The denunciation of sin is never popular. In olden days men burned the prophet with his writings. To-day they burn neither, but through misrepresentation and refined forms of persecution the prophets are made to suffer. Yet let them never be afraid. It is said of Baruch and Jeremiah, "Jehovah hid them." There is always a hiding-place in God for those who suffer.

Conclusion.

If God sends His word to us, let us profit by the warning of the lesson. If through us He speaks, let us pray for the tender heart and unflinching loyalty to Him in saying whatever He commands. Suffering there will be, but safety also. Sin will always be angry when denounced, but God will hide us in His pavilion.

Lesson 47. JEREMIAH THE PATRIOT. Jerusalem Destroyed and the Jews Carried Captive. Scripture Section, Jer. 37: 1-39: 10; 2 Ki. 24: 18-25: 21

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

The Last Decade of Judah.

The part played by Jeremiah during the reign of Zedekiah over Judah was depressing, but hardly more so than that played by the king. An appointee of Nebuchadnezzar, he was the puppet of his own subjects, wholly unable to control the turbulent nobles. For a large share of the reign he remained nominally loyal to his liege lord. Jeremiah assisted him in keeping the people from rebellion by vigorously preaching, symbolically and directly, the certain result of such action. Early in the reign when the states of Palestine (Jer. chs. 27, 28) had sent ambassadors to Judah urging that a coalition against Nebuchadnezzar be formed, Jeremiah publicly handed an ox-yoke to each of the embassies to be given to their king with the declaration that revolt meant certain exile. Later a so-called prophet, Hananiah, one of that class of self-deceived or intriguing leaders who gave Jeremiah so much distress, dared to predict at the temple that within two years Jehovah would break Nebuchadnezzar's power and return to Judah the vessels and captives already carried away. He gave impressiveness to this declaration by snatching from Jeremiah's neck the wooden yoke which he was carrying and breaking it in pieces. Jeremiah departed, but soon returned with this word from Jehovah: "True, O Hananiah, you have broken the wooden yoke, but a yoke of iron shall take its place. These nations will cast off with comparative ease the kindly rule of Nebuchadnezzar, but the penalty of their rebellion shall be a really grievous servitude." The meditated revolt did not take place at that time. But the nobles increased in power, they overruled the weak

sovereign, they publicly disgraced Jeremiah, they encouraged the people in open idolatry. By 588 B. C., relying mainly upon the glowing promises of the emissaries of the new king of the freshly prospering Egypt, the young Hophra or Apries, Judah with Tyre and Ammon accepted the alliance and renounced their Babylonian fealty. By this act Judah's doom was sealed. Nebuchadnezzar was deliberate (Ezek. 21:21), but ruthless. He planned a skilful campaign, laid waste the country, and invested Jerusalem.

Ezekiel's Contemporaneous Activity.

Despite Jeremiah's declarations, the people in Judah seemed to believe to the last that Jehovah would in some way intervene, as He had done a century earlier, and prevent the destruction of people or city or temple. Their relatives carried off to Babylonia in 597 B. C. cherished similar hopes. The supreme task, in fact, laid upon the true prophets at this crisis was to preserve the faith of the people in Jehovah in the face of the impending overwhelming calamities. Fortunate it was that in Babylonia was a prophet of priestly rank who was adequate to this task. Beginning in the fifth year of the exile and continuing until the downfall of Jerusalem, he portrayed God's real attitude toward the nation and the reasons for it in a way which truly enlightened the exiles, caused them to submit to their lot, and gradually to enter into the opportunities afforded by their Babylonian environment.

The Fall of Jerusalem.

Despite the approach of Hophra's army, forcing Nebuchadnezzar to raise the siege of Jerusalem for a time in order to march southward to meet him, the fall of the city was never in doubt. The Babylonian army soon returned and invested it closer than ever. The siege lasted for a year and a half. Its horrors are reflected by passages in the book of Lamentations. Pestilence and famine so weakened the brave defenders at last that in 586 B. C. in July the besiegers were able

to force an entrance into the doomed city. Zedekiah tried to escape, but was captured, blinded and taken to Babylon. Many of his nobles, captains and principal men were slain. Numbers were carried off as captives. The temple was stripped of its treasures and then burnt, the palace and city being likewise destroyed. This time Nebuchadnezzar did thorough work. He blotted out the nation of Judah.

The Outlook of the Prophets.

The destruction of Jerusalem was not the deathblow of prophetic hopes. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel believed in Jehovah, His love for His people of Israel, and His purpose to use them for the enlightenment and blessing of the world. They felt sure that His purpose would yet be fulfilled through a true Israel, no longer, however, a political Israel, but an aggregation of those who were true to Israelitish ideals. When all hearts were sick and sore, they comforted them by glowing pictures of the future which would surely be realized under the leadership of a wise and strong shepherd who would be God's true representative. Thus the calamity became only the precursor of a brighter day.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

Introductory.

In this lesson we have reached the crisis in the history of the chosen people in which its power is broken, and it is almost entirely carried into captivity. To the very last a prophet of God bears solemn testimony to the fact of His supremacy and government, even though such testimony was given at the cost of great and cruel persecution. The sounding of that voice, had they but known their day, was always an opportunity for repentance and return. Instead of repentance, their attitude was one of continuous rebellion until the irrevocable blow fell and they were carried away, a royal people by Divine intention, broken and enslaved by a

Godless people. We may gather lessons of encouragement and warning from the action of the prophet and the attitude of the people.

The Man. A Revelation of Loyalty.

The appointed portion of Scripture cannot be studied without a double sense of horror and admiration—horror at the terrible suffering through which the prophet passed, and admiration at the magnificent consistency with which he persisted in speaking only the message of Jehovah. This is a perpetual wonder in the history of the true messenger of God. It would have been easy for him to miss the persecution, and the prison, and all the terrible suffering. A modification of his message by accommodation to the desire of the princes, a softening of its terrible roughness, even a general denunciation of sin without the particular insistance upon the falsity of their hopes from Egypt, and the certainty of the victory of the Chaldeans, any of these changes would have saved him. Yet he never faltered, but steadily, in spite of the anger of man, the voice reiterated what God had given him to say, which brought upon him the sufferings described. This has been repeated in all ages. Many examples might be quoted. Let one of the simplest be chosen. In the days of the old Scotch Covenanters a wee laddie, one Jamie Douglas, for refusing to play traitor to truth was one day held over a steep and rough precipice by a brutal soldier, and given the option of disloyalty or death. Looking up into the face of the man with eyes bright with the light of truth and heroism, he said: "Drop me down, then, if ye must; 'tis ne'er so deep as hell." What is the secret of heroism like that of Jeremiah and Jamie Douglas? It springs from personal knowledge of God. To see God is ever to see all other matters in their true proportion and perspective. We live in days when disloyalty to the testimony of truth is not likely to produce such physical sufferings, and our need for loyalty on the selfish side is not so great.

Here is our subtle temptation. There is, however, the same need for loyalty, and there is still suffering for righteousness' sake.

The Nation. A Warning.

The warning afforded by the history of the people is so patent as to need little argument. It is the story of the strange and awful hardening of heart and conscience which ever follows upon persistent sin. What a strange infatuation possesses the rebellious! With all the history of the centuries behind them, and its testimony to the certainty of punishment and defeat following upon refusal to listen to the voice of the messengers of God, these rulers and people persisted in the courses against which the prophet had warned them until it was too late, and the blow fell in all its tremendous force. Let it be ours to examine our own hearts as to the principle of action which masters us. Are we blinded by sin until the very vision of righteousness is dimmed? The question can only be answered by determined submission of our own lives to the scrutiny and testing of the Word of God. If by that testing we find we are wrong, He will receive, restore, renew the repentant soul, but persistent rebellion can only end in destruction.

Lesson 48. DANIEL AND HIS FRIENDS. Stories from the Captivity in Babylon. Scripture Section, Dan. chs. 1-6

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

The Location and Duration of the Exile.

The second division of exiles, like the first, was carried off to Babylonia, and forced to settle down not far from the capital city. There the unhappy remnant of those who were once so proud of their lineage and their land was permitted to lead its own kind of life and encouraged to make permanent homes. Babylon was not the only country in which exiles from Judah were to be found. Multitudes were in Egypt as well. In both countries their lot might have been far worse than it actually was. The exiles were free to take advantage of the opportunities for trade or culture which each country offered. Their principal restriction was in regard to their movements. They could not return to their old homes.

For about half a century the exile continued. In 537 B. C. Cyrus issued the famous rescript which permitted the captive peoples in Babylonia to return to their proper homes with the gods that had also been carried away. Jeremiah's estimate of seventy years (Jer. 25:12; 29:10) is either to be interpreted as a round number or to be counted to the completion of the second temple.

The Opportunities Thereby Offered.

No better training ground than Babylonia could have been assigned to Israel. It was a land of religious culture, or commercial opportunity, of freedom to rise by the exhibition of ability. Men of priestly rank among the exiles debarred from their usual duties, and inspired by the example of the Babylonian priestly *literati*, turned their energies to the study, the editing and the publication of their sacred writings. Others

gave themselves to business and became bankers or merchants. So successful did they become that Jews were soon found in active business all over the empire in every important city. A third opening for talent was afforded by the court and government. The records of the Babylonian state show that the case of Daniel and his companions was not exceptional. If by beauty of person or by exceptional ability a foreign-born captive attracted the favorable notice of those in prison, he was frequently treated with consideration, appointed to a position at the court, and given the chance to rise. Curious as the statement may seem, it is true that the Babylonian administration was managed on a fairly democratic basis, efficiency being the test of the service, at least in subordinate posts. For a captive to become the third ruler of the kingdom was, of course, very rare, yet Nehemiah, an ardent and probably a consistent Jew, was the cup-bearer, an office of great distinction, responsibility and influence, to the Persian sovereign.

The Lessons of the Exile.

After the death of Nebuchadnezzar in 562 B. C., a short series of incapable or unfortunate sovereigns brought to the throne in 556 Nabonidas, the last recorded ruler of the empire. Belshazzar was his son and may have been for a time the regent, but of this there is no direct evidence. To all intents and purposes he was a ruler, but not the actual sovereign, for all known business documents of the era were dated in the name of Nabonidas down to the very week in which they begin to be dated in the name of Cyrus.

Under these later sovereigns the captives were apparently liable to harsher treatment. They may have been drafted for the never-ending work of erecting or repairing the stately temples and palaces and the important works of a public character. They may have exposed themselves as a body to severity by reason of unrest and insubordination. There are, at least, hints

in the prophetic writings of the time that many were exposed to sufferings almost unendurable.

The experiences of the exile, varied as they were, gave rich instruction to the little nation which made its new headquarters by the river Chebar. It was first of all cured of idolatry. Either its repulsion at the extravagant religious eclecticism of the Babylonians, or the growing conviction that Jehovah had sent the exile as a deserved reminder to be faithful to Him, or both together brought the people to an attitude of loyalty to Jehovah from which they did not recede.

The people were at the same time brought into a working unity. All differences were minimized in the presence of the greater exigency. While knowing their own mind, however, as a people, and never yielding their purpose to restore the Jewish state, they entered freely and effectively into the educational and commercial opportunities of Babylonia. Thus they won the genuine strength, the resourcefulness and the breadth of outlook which carried them safely through the vicissitudes of the next five centuries.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

Introductory.

This lesson reveals the possibilities of Godliness in the midst of circumstances of ungodliness. Daniel and his friends were loyal to God even in the land of their captors, and amid all the enticements of the court. In such circumstances, perhaps, the subtlest of all temptations assault the men of faith. It is so much easier to float with the stream than to stem it. The principle of accommodation appeals so strongly to our desire for ease, that it needs very definite courage to resist.

Our lesson may be best learned by centering our attention upon Daniel, and the key to the splendid fidelity of the man may be found in the repeated statement that he was a man of excellent spirit. Let us examine

that spirit that we may cultivate it, and so be able to maintain a similar loyalty under circumstances of difficulty.

A Spirit of Purpose.

This is declared in the beginning of the story (1:8). Directly Daniel found himself in a place of peril "he purposed in his heart." This is of supreme importance. Thousands of men drift into evil courses for lack of a definite and positive committal of themselves to a right course. To delay at the first consciousness of perilous surroundings is to compromise presently, and finally to apostatize. Daniel speaks in no uncertain tones:

> Dare to have a purpose firm,
> Dare to make it known.

Spirit of Prayer.

Nothing stands out more clearly than the fact that this man of purpose was a man of prayer. When the interpretation of the king's dream was asked he called his friends into a compact of prayer, and the subsequent story reveals him as a man having regular habits of prayer. This is of equal importance with the former and is the strength of its realization. Strong purpose is only powerful in execution as we are dependent on God. The heart may be firmly determined to loyalty, but unless we know how to lean hard upon God the forces against us will prove too much for us. A man meaning to do right and depending upon God is invincible.

A Spirit of Perception.

There is no doubt that the gift of interpretation which Daniel received was one specially bestowed on him by God for specific purposes. The immediate application to us is, that to the man who has made his purpose and waits upon God, there will be given a clarity of vision which will enable him to accomplish the Divine work allotted to him. It may be, as in the case of Daniel, that of interpretation, or it may be in some other department. The one certain fact is that

such a man will be "of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord."

A Spirit of Power.

Growing out of the fact already considered is the final one of the strength of this man. This was manifest in his quiet refusal to eat of the king's meat and drink of his wine. It was a small matter, but victory here meant greater strength and larger triumph later on, as defeat here might have meant disaster finally. This strength is manifest again when he dares to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream faithfully, though it foretells his condign punishment, and even more strikingly when he fearlessly denounces Belshazzar and foretells his doom. It needs true strength to correct those upon whose patronage we seem to depend. Yet in all he was a man of strength. It is interesting to note how loyalty to God issued in his case, in his coming into positions of great importance in Babylon, Media and Persia. Too often we grasp at earthly power by compromise, and eventually lose it. The only power of value is that which rests upon consistency in the pathway of truth.

Conclusion.

This story reveals the secret sources of true greatness, and affords an illustration of how the cultivation of these issues in manifest strength.

Lesson 49. ZERUBBABEL AND THE RETURN. The Captivity Ended and the Temple Rebuilt. Scripture Section, Ezra chs. 1-6

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

The Conquest of Babylonia by Cyrus.

The Neo-Babylonian empire did not long outlast the death of the great Nebuchadnezzar. During his reign he had regarded the warlike Medes as his truly dangerous foes and had completed great defensive works at the points of probable invasion. But Babylonia's real foe appeared from another quarter. One of the vassal-princes of Media, the prince of Ansan, Cyrus by name, developed suddenly a prowess which proved invincible. He enlarged his own territory, subdued the Medes, invaded and conquered the North and West country, and within a decade had become the undisputed master of all the available world except Babylonia and Egypt. By that time it was clear to any keen observer that Babylonia would be his next objective and that he was likely to succeed. Passages like Isaiah 13:17-22; 43:14 and 44:28-45:6 reflect the exultant forecasts of the prophets of the Jewish people. All eyes were turned toward the famous conqueror. Cyrus did not disappoint these hopes. In 538 B. C. he invaded Babylonia from two directions, was treacherously given access to the central city and won the empire with scarcely a blow.

His Generous Policy.

Cyrus was a truly great leader of men. He could win the faithful and enthusiastic service of his most determined opponents by his large-minded considerations. He was willing to give great freedom of action to loyal subjects. One of his first acts after assuming control in Babylonia was to give free permission to the peoples of foreign birth living as captives in Babylonia to return to their homes, carrying with them their gods,

for whom they were urged to erect suitable shrines. The inscription reporting this decree does not mention the Jews among the people who were included under its provisions; but our records afford the requisite proof. We only note that their case was not exceptional. They would hardly have been overlooked, for there were strategic reasons for repopulating the hills of Palestine with a sturdy and loyal race, and for rebuilding their strong fortress, Jerusalem. There were plenty of people in southern Palestine; but they were dispirited, poor and without leaders.

The Meager Response.

It is a curious fact that no great number of the Jews of Babylonia cared to take advantage at this time of the permission accorded by Cyrus. Babylon had become the actual homeland of the living generation. It was the land of larger opportunity. Moreover they had become accustomed to the faithful worship of the God of their fathers in a foreign land. To abide under the shadow of the temple no longer seemed essential. The few who were eager to return were those whose lives were in the past.

The Spirit of the Return.

The Jews who were ready to return at any sacrifice were the spiritual children of Ezekiel, not of Jeremiah. They had a spirit of exclusiveness, not of catholicity. They were committed to the policy of achieving righteousness by living a life of strict conformity to rule in virtual seclusion from the rest of the world. They were, therefore, tending toward intolerance, exclusiveness and bigotry. According to Ezra 4 : 1-5 the manifestation of this spirit by the first returners led to a frustration of their plans for rebuilding the temple.

The Rebuilding of the Temple.

Be that as it may, in the opening years of the reign of Darius, the leaders of the community in Judah, stirred by the exhortation of Haggai and sustained by

the glowing visions of Zechariah, gave themselves with energy to the work of building the temple and of repairing the city wall, especially to the former task. Interrogated by the governor of the district they appealed to the decree of Cyrus. After long search the original decree was discovered at Ecbatana and confirmed by Darius, who also made liberal grants-in-aid.

Encouraged by the royal favor the building rose rapidly and was dedicated with great rejoicing in the sixth year of the reign of Darius.

The Rekindled Hopes.

Such passages as Haggai 2:9, 21-23 and Zechariah 2:4; 6:11-15, 8:1-9, reveal the intensity of the hopes aroused in the hearts of the loyal Jews by the successful completion of the temple. It was more than their national rallying-place; it betokened the reassociation of Jehovah's presence with his people. They looked forward with confidence to the speedy sweeping away of their foes, the glorification of the temple, the supremacy of the nation and the fulfilment of their hopes.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

Introductory.

Just fifty years after the fall of Jerusalem the edict of Cyrus went forth which made possible the return and restoration. Jeremiah had predicted a seventy years' servitude. This is significant from the fact that it was twenty years later than the edict of Cyrus when the temple was dedicated, and until then the servitude had not really ceased. This return judged by the human standards was indeed a poverty stricken affair. Less than fifty thousand people, all told, returned, and less than half a million dollars were subscribed toward the work. Yet seen in the light of the Divine movement it was a wonderful event, issuing in important and far-reaching results.

The Divine Activity.

The key to the whole movement is found in a word spoken by one of the prophets of the period. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zech. 4:6). These people did not reach their city and build their temple in any single sense through the strength of armies. It was wholly through the government by God of the affairs of the nations. This is remarkably stated in Ezra 6:14. "They builded and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the decree of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia." It came about through perfectly natural events. Cyrus conquered Babylon and then permitted all exiles to return to their own land. In this permission is seen the over-ruling hand of God. It was not a thing to be expected, and yet quite possible in the very nature and caprice and despotism of such a potentate. The hearts of men are all unknown to themselves, under the control of God for the accomplishment of His purpose. "Thus saith Jehovah to Cyrus . . . I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me" (Is. 45:1, 4). If this lesson only serves to remind us of this great truth it will be of inestimable value to us. The ambition of kings, the policies of statesmen, the feverishness of nations, all are limited and manipulated by God for the carrying out of His designs. All things obey and serve the far-reaching and sublime purpose of God.

The Returning Remnant.

While it is true that the numbers and wealth of those returning were poor indeed, yet it is also true that measured by other standards it was a remnant chosen and selected. With God quality always counts for more than quantity. One man truly loyal is of greater value than a thousand time-servers, and one dollar which represents sacrifice, is far greater in producing power than millions given grudgingly or in a spirit of patronage and pride. The

nature of the edict of Cyrus was permissory, and therefore the going was voluntary. Those who set their faces toward the old place were such as had appreciated the true meaning of their captivity, and were in the true sense of the word chastened thereby. The vast majority never returned. They preferred the comforts of their degradation, and so were absorbed and lost as to their nationality. Those who went were a remnant of Judah and Israel, who notwithstanding all their weakness and continued frailty loved their Divinely-appointed nationality, and returned in loyalty of heart to Jehovah. Frail and faulty indeed they were, as their long neglect of the house of God subsequently demonstrated, yet loyal and willing to be led, as their response to the messages of Haggai and Zechariah prove. The one fact of supreme importance to remember is that these people had at least learned one truth of overwhelming importance, namely, that of the fact of the one God, for idolatry never again found a place in their history.

Conclusion.

Oh, the comfort to our hearts to-day of those strange old stories! God is never defeated. He will not suffer any failure on the part of man to finally prevent the victories upon which His heart is set. Kings and kingdoms serve His purpose.

He chooses the weak things to confound the mighty. Let us not despair if out of so poor a people, poor in earthly possession and moral fibre, He established a centre and maintained a testimony until the Deliverer came. He will not suffer any evil combination to extinguish the light or silence the voice of truth until He come a second time.

Lesson 50. NEHEMIAH THE BUILDER OF THE WALL. The Jews Re-established in Jerusalem. Scripture Section, Neh. chs. 1-6; 12 : 27-43

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

The Dispersion and Its Significance.

Looked at from a later period the dispersion, far from being a calamity for Israel, was its opportunity. Culture, wealth, freedom of life, influence and often power came to the Jewish citizen of the broader empire. Even before the conquest by Cyrus, the exiled captive was free to engage in commercial or literary pursuits. Thereafter he was as unrestricted in life as any other man.

Israel thus found her means of educating the world in righteousness. The Jews were quick to seize their opportunities. They scattered all over the civilized, commercial world. Everywhere they formed communities, often very influential, which preserved an unchanging loyalty to the institution of Judaism. Thus they were enabled to influence the world in a way impossible to a people shut up in Palestine. "Israel abroad" became of far greater importance than the "Israel at home."

Nehemiah's Position.

The possibilities before a fine specimen of the Jewish race in that tolerant age are well illustrated by the history of Nehemiah. A devout and trusted leader of his own people, influential and attractive, he had won his own way to high favor with the great king of Persia. He had become his intimate associate and trusted companion, exercising the dignified and important office of cup-bearer to the king. To have held such a position and yet to maintain personal integrity was to give evidence of a strong and fine character. It is not unreasonable to think that Daniel and Nehemiah were only two out of many Jews who attained to lofty rank and large responsibility at the foreign courts.

The Message from Jerusalem.

Nearly a century had passed since the gracious conqueror, Cyrus, had permitted the re-occupation of Judah. The ardent hopes aroused by the rebuilding of the temple had been disappointed. The religious leaders of the people in the province, notably the priesthood, as Malachi almost savagely declares, had been unfaithful. Religion was at a low ebb. It seemed that there was just one chance to rehabilitate the nation—by the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem, and the restoration and repopulation of the city. To the faithful ones in Judah there was just one leader adequate for the task—the favorite of the dread sovereign.

Nehemiah received the appeal; it reached his heart; he matured his plans; but bided the time when God should open the way for him to act. His chance came suddenly, but he was ready, and obtained from his fond but autocratic master all the privileges which were essential to his success.

The Building of the Wall.

The story of his bold and clever leadership is one of the most stirring narratives in the Old Testament. He took no chances where caution was worth the while, but swung the work along by sheer enthusiasm and courage where results were essential. Himself ever at the front, he protected his workmen both by diplomatic methods and by force, until the foes of the little community, alarmed at the rapid progress of the wall, tried every artifice for his ruin. Nehemiah, the trained courtier, was more than their match. Their most dangerous political weapon he warded (Neh. 6:5); their cleverest religious trick he foiled by simple righteousness and modesty (Neh. 6:11).

The speed of building was extraordinary. It is not unlikely that a numeral representing the years has dropped out of the text. In any case the erection was rapid but substantial. When once completed the city was safe from such attacks as it had constantly suffered.

The Significance of the Wall.

The debt of the people to Nehemiah for this achievement cannot readily be overstated. The completion of the wall meant more than the recovery and repopulating of the city of Jerusalem. It gave to the people a sense of security and of self-confidence of the utmost value. It gave them a rallying-center. It furnished a home to which the foreign born Jew could return. No wonder that the dedication of the wall was so joyful an event, participated in by all the representatives of the people.

The measures necessary to the proper use of the newly created city were promptly taken. When Nehemiah went back to the Persian court, he did so with the happy consciousness that the task entrusted to him had been gloriously carried through. Despite opposition within and without he had fulfilled his trust.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

Introductory.

This story of the building of the wall by Nehemiah is as thrilling as any in the whole history of these people. It was a piece of work of great importance at the time, and still greater in its effect upon subsequent history. Through its accomplishment the people were settled and strengthened, and thus Nehemiah made a definite contribution to the preparatory work for the coming of the Messiah. The chief value of the lesson is in its revelation of how a man did a piece of work of great importance, under circumstances of extreme difficulty. It is a story full of encouragement to all who in times of peril are called upon to do work for God, and we shall best learn the lessons suggested by examining the story as it reveals the means adopted by Nehemiah. There are seven matters to consider.

Nehemiah's Interest.

The book opens with an account of Nehemiah's in-

quiry after the condition of affairs at Jerusalem. He was occupying a place of confidence and comfort at the court of Artaxerxes, but his heart was far away with his people, and his chief interest was with them. This is in itself a revelation of his strength. It is so easy to forget when far away, and especially when the place of distance is one of personal ease.

Nehemiah's Sorrow.

The answer to his inquiry was brief and blunt, and it revealed the sad condition of the people. The story filled him with grief. The sorrows of his people were his. The comfort of his own position was nothing to him when the beloved city was in a state of desolation. His sadness mastered him and manifested itself even in the presence of the king. This is yet a deeper note and reveals his character. No great work of deliverance has even been carried out save as it has sprung out of a sympathetic compassion. To feel with is to act for.

Nehemiah's Prayer.

The first activity is that of prayer. The method of the prayer is remarkable. First, confession in which he identifies himself with the sins of the people, then a pleading of the promises of God, finally a definite petition that he might find favor with the king. Strong men always know their own weakness and depend upon God. The work which does not condition itself in prayer is never effective.

Nehemiah's Activity.

This prayer is heard and answered, and the door of opportunity is opened before him. The lines of his activity are now of the wisest. First, a quiet inspection which will put him in possession of the facts of the case, then a call to others to co-operate, then a wise and systematic division of labor. These again are the true lines of service. A patient and quiet mastering of facts, a readiness to call in helpers and an ability to set each to work in his own right place.

Nehemiah's Fidelity.

With the commencement of work came the beginning of hostile opposition. This manifests itself in four ways: (1) Criticism. This was responded to by prayer to God. (2) Conspiracy. To this Nehemiah answered by praying and setting a watch. (3) Internal disaffection. This was corrected by self-denying ordinances, Nehemiah setting a splendid example. (4) Cunning. To this he replied by continuity in his work and steady refusal to be tempted away therefrom.

Nehemiah's Victory.

At last the wall was finished. The crown of the toil was in the completion of the work. The justification of the obstinacy was in the erected wall. No praise is quite so sweet as the actual work positively done.

Nehemiah's Joy.

The story of dedication is full of the thrill of a great delight. All classes stand in the triumph, for all had co-operated in the toil, priests, princes, and people. We are not surprised to read that "they sang loud" or that the "joy of Jerusalem was heard afar off." In all this joy surely Nehemiah had the largest share, for there was not only the personal victory, but the great gladness he had given to others.

Conclusion.

No comment is equal to the story itself. Let us remember that if we would at last know the triumphant joy which was Nehemiah's, we must begin in interest and tears, and proceed by prayer and toil and fidelity.

Lesson 51. EZRA AND NEHEMIAH ESTABLISHING THE LAW. The End of the Old Testament History. Scripture Section, Neh. 8 : 1-10 ; 39; 13 : 4-31

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

The Legal and Scribal Movement in Israel.

The exile in Babylonia did not necessarily create a religious literature for Israel, but assuredly stimulated its growth. Cut off from temple, city and land, and surrounded by the varied influences which make for culture, the Jewish leaders developed a strong desire for the collection and editing of the earlier writings of the nation, especially of the laws; and for the formulation of rules of religious life which would effectually prevent for the future such national unfaithfulness as that which had brought captivity upon them.

The great task of collating, arranging, editing, copying and interpreting these Scriptures soon gave rise to a class of skilled *literati* among the Jews in Babylonia. Some of them gave their energies to the preparation of perfect editions, some to their accurate reproduction, still others to the interpretation and exposition of their contents. So much stress came soon to be laid on an accurate knowledge of the law that these teachers were held in highest esteem. They acquired great influence. Through their unwearying labors the Old Testament began to come into being.

Its Leader.

The most notable of these scribes in the fifth century B. C. was Ezra, a priest born and educated in Babylonia. He excelled in scholarship and as well in religious fervor. Under his leadership the collecting and arranging of the earlier law seemed to have approached its conclusion. He longed to see it thoroughly obeyed, believing that the sincere and thorough keeping of the law would bring prosperity and blessing to his people. At a date which is somewhat uncertain, but surely be-

longs to the latter half of the fifth century B. C., he organized an expedition to go to Judea to re-establish a respect for the law, which seemed to be practically ignored.

His Contrast with Nehemiah.

As leaders of an enterprise there was an interesting contrast between the priest Ezra and the layman Nehemiah. The latter, as we have noted, was shrewd, far-sighted, a good judge of men, a wise and brave leader. The former was brave as a lion but impulsive. He boasted of God's guidance before the king so roundly (Ezra 8:22) that later on he was ashamed to request a guard. He would have kept the people of Judah in assembly regardless of the weather (Ezra 10:10-14) until he had personally examined into the marriages of the Jews with the women of other peoples, an action which he deemed a shameful violation of the sacred covenant. He had room for but one idea at a time, pursuing that, however, with diligence and energy.

Their Joint Achievement.

Without Nehemiah, Ezra was quite incapable of carrying through a permanent reform. His methods were too strenuous. With Nehemiah's co-operation he could achieve large results. The supreme object of Ezra's ambition was the acceptance by the people of Judea of the law as the rule of life. They needed to this end education, inspiration and leadership. At a great assembly, held probably sometime after Ezra's first appearance, perhaps after a number of years, the law at the request of the people was publicly read and explained by Ezra and his scribes. It made a profound impression. For a week this instruction went on, concluding with a solemn festival of thanksgiving. Two weeks later was held by the evident consent of the people a great ceremony of confession and dedication, at the conclusion of which the representatives of the people, headed by Nehemiah, signed a solemn covenant to

keep the whole law. It was "The Birthday of Judaism." From that day at least until now the Jews have never faltered in their loyalty to the whole Mosaic law, substantially as we find it formulated in the Old Testament to-day.

The Significance of the New Era.

Judaism was a stage and a necessary one in religious development. It embodied many great and permanent ideas, notably those of holiness, purity, whole-souled consecration, orderliness of worship, universal education and absolute freedom within strict limits. Its exclusiveness and its formalism were its great drawbacks, but these served their purpose well, protecting and preserving both people and institutions during a period of constant assault.

No less cohesive a system could have withstood successfully the insidious attacks of Hellenism, before which every other religious faith of Western Asia yielded. It was a fight to the finish in Maccabean days in the second century between the two. Out of that conflict arose a new and stronger Judaism with vitality, ambition, wisdom and the promise of spiritual power. By it were nurtured men like Zacharias and Nicodemus, as well as men like Caiaphas. The dry husk never ceased to protect a sweet, nutritious kernel, which was ready for the use of humankind.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

Introduction.

In a still later prophecy, that of Malachi, we have by deduction a glimpse of history subsequent to that of this lesson. As to the actual historic section of the Old Testament, this lesson is the last in order. The people of God are here seen gathered back to their city, and the united influence of Ezra and Nehemiah is exerted for establishing them in such relation to the law of Jehovah as shall be for their preservation until the

great hour come for which all else had been preparatory. The lessons of the lesson gather round a method and a man, both of which are of vital interest, and of perpetual value. There are three movements: (1) The Reading of the Law, (2) The Establishment of a Covenant, and (3) The Enforcement of Order. In the first two we see the method, and in the third the man.

The Reading of the Law.

The story is a very old one, and at first it may seem as though there could hardly be any present application which is of value. As a matter of fact there is hardly any of more present urgency. This reading of the law was of the greatest importance both in itself and in the method as described. The solemn gathering of the people, not for any other purpose than that of hearing the word which was the veritable message of God, the reading of this message with such interpretation as was necessary to make clear its meaning, and its subsequent reading by the elders alone, are all methods which it would be well for us if we observed and imitated. The most urgent business of the church to-day should be that of demanding the attention of the age to the word of God, and the one supreme vocation of the Christian minister should be that of interpreting to men the true meaning of that word. Any gathering of the people for other purposes is less than the highest in value, and any message delivered other than that of God Himself, is likely to mislead, and can never issue in highest results.

The effect produced by such examination of the sacred oracles will ever be the same. First, a consciousness of failure as conduct is compared with the requirements of God; secondly, a new understanding of the love which inspires law, a great awakening to the sense of the goodness and faithfulness of God; then thirdly, and necessarily, a genuine humiliation and confession of sin and failure. These are the very results we need to-day more than any other, but they can only be

brought about in this way. So long as men measure themselves by false standards they will form false estimates of themselves and of God, and instead of humiliation and confession there will be boasting and pride. Let the scriptures of truth be made known anew, in order to right thinking.

The Subsequent Covenant.

Yet right thinking is only of value as it issues in right acting. This immediately followed. The people renewed a covenant with Jehovah which was conditioned wholly in the terms of the divine law. All that they said they would do, was what God had declared He required them to do. The value was created by their willingness to do. This is an age of new and remarkable interest in the Scriptures, for every phase of which we do well to be thankful. Yet there is a great peril threatening us, that of being content with merely intellectual relationships to truth. This is of no great value, but rather tends to hardening of heart save as life is corrected at every point by the light which falls. To be conscious of shortcoming, and satisfied with it, is disastrous. To see the love of law, and to continue to break the law, is the most aggravated form of sin. Better not to know, than knowing, to fail to do.

The Enforcement.

This conviction created the conduct of Nehemiah. It is impossible to read the last pages of his story without feeling the fire of his conviction. There is an eagerness and a passion in his method which reveals the depth and intensity of his belief. There are times which demand methods which are drastic and unsparing. Jesus made a whip once at least, and adopted the methods of overturning and turning out. This method is only to be used for those who are inside the covenant by profession. Do we not need to-day men who are "very jealous" for obedience, men who will dare the conventionalities and drive forth all unholy things from the shelter of the sanctuary of God?

Lesson 52. Review of Lessons 40-51

1. Historical Notes

By Dean Frank K. Sanders, D.D., Yale University

The Last Three Centuries of the Hebrew Nation: 700-400 B. C.: A Review.

The political downfall of the Hebrew nation was its spiritual salvation. The three centuries following 700 B. C. were crowded with national disappointments, but these led to such fresh and vital forecastings of the future that hope never had a chance to die nor spiritual growth to cease. These were educative centuries. The nation discovered at once the value and the unimportance of her cherished institutions and began to discriminate among spiritual values. Thus her experiences made for the permanent enlargement of the world's religious outlook.

Israel's Contact with the World.

The conquest of Canaan by Sennacherib about 700 B. C. was at the beginning of Israel's contact with foreign nations; but it inaugurated a close relationship of dependence upon great world powers, with Assyria, Neo-Babylonia and Persia in turn, which had great educative importance, and was fraught with consequences alike good and bad. Israel learned to think in terms of the inhabited world. Jehovah became the Sovereign Providence and His dealings with His people a continuous development of a world plan. Israel assimilated and utilized for her own ends the ingenuity, the culture, the enterprise of these outside nations. Her sons became in time true citizens of the world, loyal to their faith but at home everywhere. During this long process, and particularly before the exile, there were many who were influenced by the religious ideas and practices of their new environment to become in fact if not in purpose disloyal to Jehovah. On the whole, however, the contact was salutary.

Her Safeguards.

That this foreign influence was not wholly pernicious was due to certain institutional safeguards. Prominent among these was the temple at Jerusalem with its established ritual and honored priesthood. Whatever form of idolatry was popular it found a home and a certain restriction there. The temple was the never-changing fact, until the people foreswore idolatry altogether. Equal in importance were the national traditions, ever strong in Judah. Despite the weak and vicious kings the line of David as a whole was noted for uprightness and positive leadership. A Manasseh was followed by a Josiah, who honored the traditions of his race. Most effective of all her safeguards were her prophetic leaders and critics. Courageous, clear-headed, far-sighted, outspoken, they kept the national conscience responsive and its vision alert and keen. There were never lacking at least a few Israelites who maintained the things worth supporting.

Her Inevitable Downfall.

Such as these were, however, in the minority. The great mass of the people loved the license and the simplicity of the foreign cults and hoped to invoke the powerful influence of their gods. The ethical and religious standards of the prophetic party they resented; their leadership they rejected. With all this they preserved a fanatical confidence in Jehovah's preservation of His temple, His city and His people. Refusing to consider the consequences, they committed repeated acts of insubordination, until invasion and exile became inevitable.

Before the exile both prophets and people had regarded the nation as God's indispensable working unit. This supreme disaster followed by a maintenance of national religious standards in a foreign land revealed to both the great idea that God's working unit was rather the consecrated individual, who could serve Him anywhere. This advance was worth all it cost.

Lines of Reconstruction.

The working platform of the later Israel included some noteworthy features. An exact knowledge of the available Scriptures as containing the revelation of God's will was its foundation. This led to editorial and educational activity. This led to the establishment of the synagogue, the national gathering place for hearing and studying the law and the assurance of widespread popular intelligence. It also led to a narrow and exclusive organization of religious life and practice but, as we have seen, this even had its values. Judaism was admirably adapted for the dogged maintenance of ideals under bitter persecution.

The Jew was a marked man in the last four centuries B. C., but his distinction was an honorable one. He had a clear-cut faith in a personal God, he lived up to the demands of that faith as he understood them, he was willing to undergo heroic sacrifices in its behalf; he impressed his sense of religious reality and values on people who had not even enough enthusiasm to be skeptics; he stood out as a true and strong religious leader, thus fulfilling prophecy in spite of himself.

II. Expository Notes

By Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., Northfield, Mass.

Introductory.

We have come to the close of the quarter and the year. The quarter's studies have dealt with the period of the passing of the power of the king, and the preeminince of the prophet. Four reformations under kings are chronicled: Asa, Joash, Hezekiah, Josiah. They were practically all prophet-inspired. The personality of Jeremiah and Isaiah are far more potential than that of any of the kings. The messenger of God was the power behind the throne asking for righteousness. Every one of these kings failed in greater or less degree. Their reforms were also in large measure futile. Subsequently to the kingly line yet further

results were achieved. The period sees most important work done in the divine economy,—the reversal of the materialistic policy inaugurated by Solomon, the destruction of the worship of Baal, the final cessation of idolatry, and the restoration of the law.

The whole year has given us in outline the history of the Chosen People, from a man, Abraham, to a people broken and afflicted and yet embodying principles of truth of the greatest importance to the race, and preparing a channel through which a Deliverer was to come, and a greater work be accomplished.

The Lessons of the Quarter.

One overwhelming consciousness possesses the mind as this last period is contemplated. It is that which so often possessed us at the beginning, and which has never been wholly absent from view, that of the overruling God, moving in mercy and majesty toward the fulfilment of the deepest intention of His grace. Through battle and strife, through failure and defeat, as well as through triumph and prosperity, through accomplishment and victory, God has moved right onward. No cycle of the years has found Him perplexed or diverted. At every critical juncture He has raised up the right men, finding them where we should never have looked for them. Through all the conflict He has maintained a testimony of Godly souls to the truth, until when in Malachi we see these people in the mirror of the prophetic word, we see them a broken and imperfect people, who nevertheless hold enshrined in their very being at least two great items of truth, the existence of the one God, and a passionate belief in a coming Deliverer.

Such contemplation is in itself the learning of the profoundest lesson. High over all the trembling thrones of earth the one throne is established and occupied, and the true confidence of man is not in himself but in God, and man's only true wisdom consists in discovering and living in co-operative obedience to His law.

The Lessons of the Course.

It is admitted that in all human history there is nothing more remarkable than the story of the Hebrew people. As to numbers and material glory, they were inferior at any point to other of the great peoples of the race, and yet they contributed on the spiritual and ethical side more of real value to the well-being of man than any of the rest, or than all of them combined. At the present time, they are a people without power, and yet exercising almost limitless power, a people scattered and peeled and yet utterly unable to lose their distinctive nationality, a perpetual and living testimony in their national death to the truths for which their very existence stands as evidence. To deny the Scriptures is to deny the Hebrew, and no man as yet had temerity to do this. Accepting then the story, we have studied it, and have found principles which are everywhere present, there focussed and crystalized. The sovereignty of God, and man's relationship thereto are made clear throughout. That relationship is conditioned by the action of the will is also seen, men being free to obey or not. And yet again the limitations of that freedom is revealed, for man may break himself on the pillars of the throne if he will, but in such breaking there is a vindication of the authority thereof. And so finally and supremely the story teaches the sad history of human failure, but even yet more clearly the sure final triumph of divine grace. The story inspires in every seeing heart the cry for the coming of the great kingdom of God.

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